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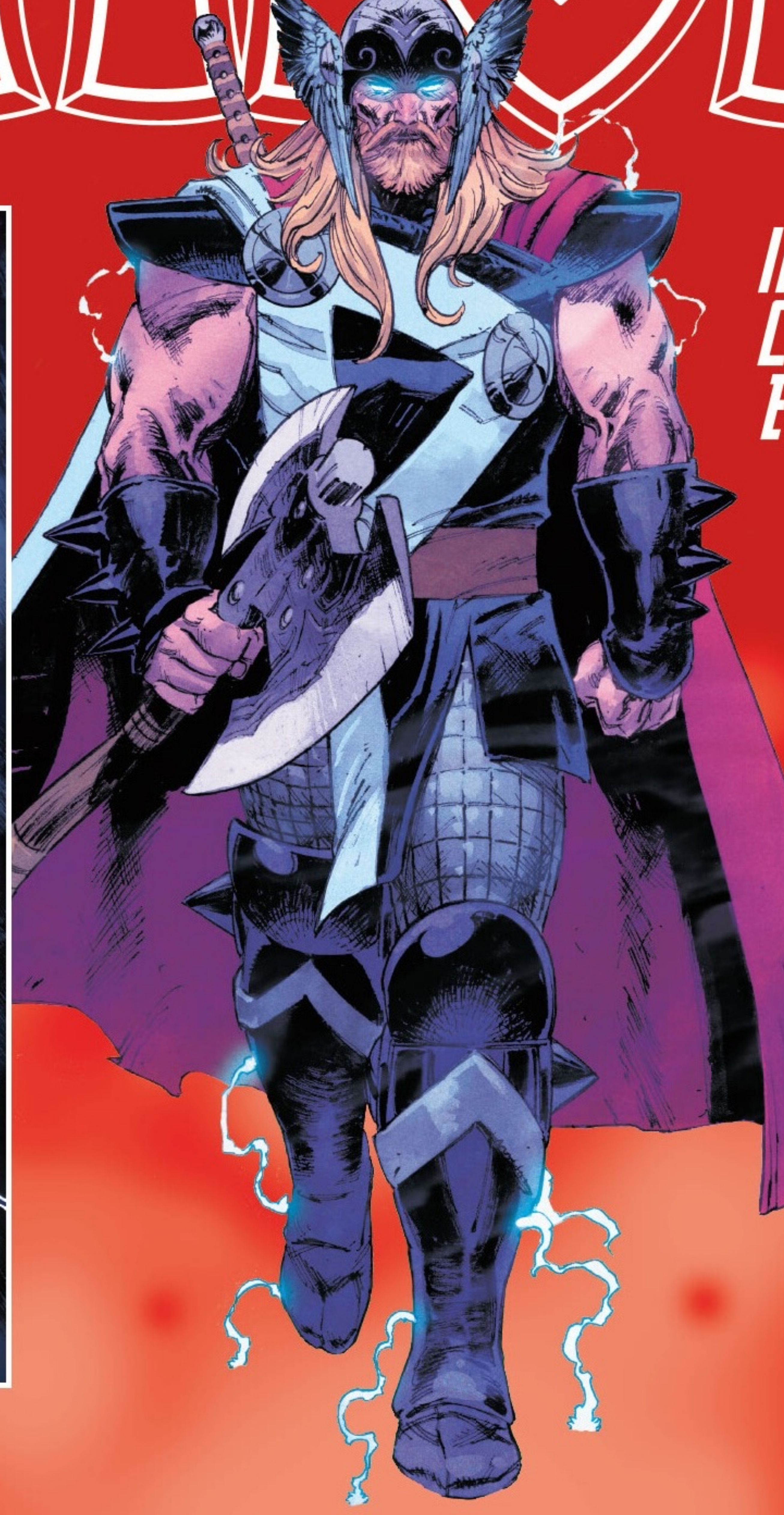

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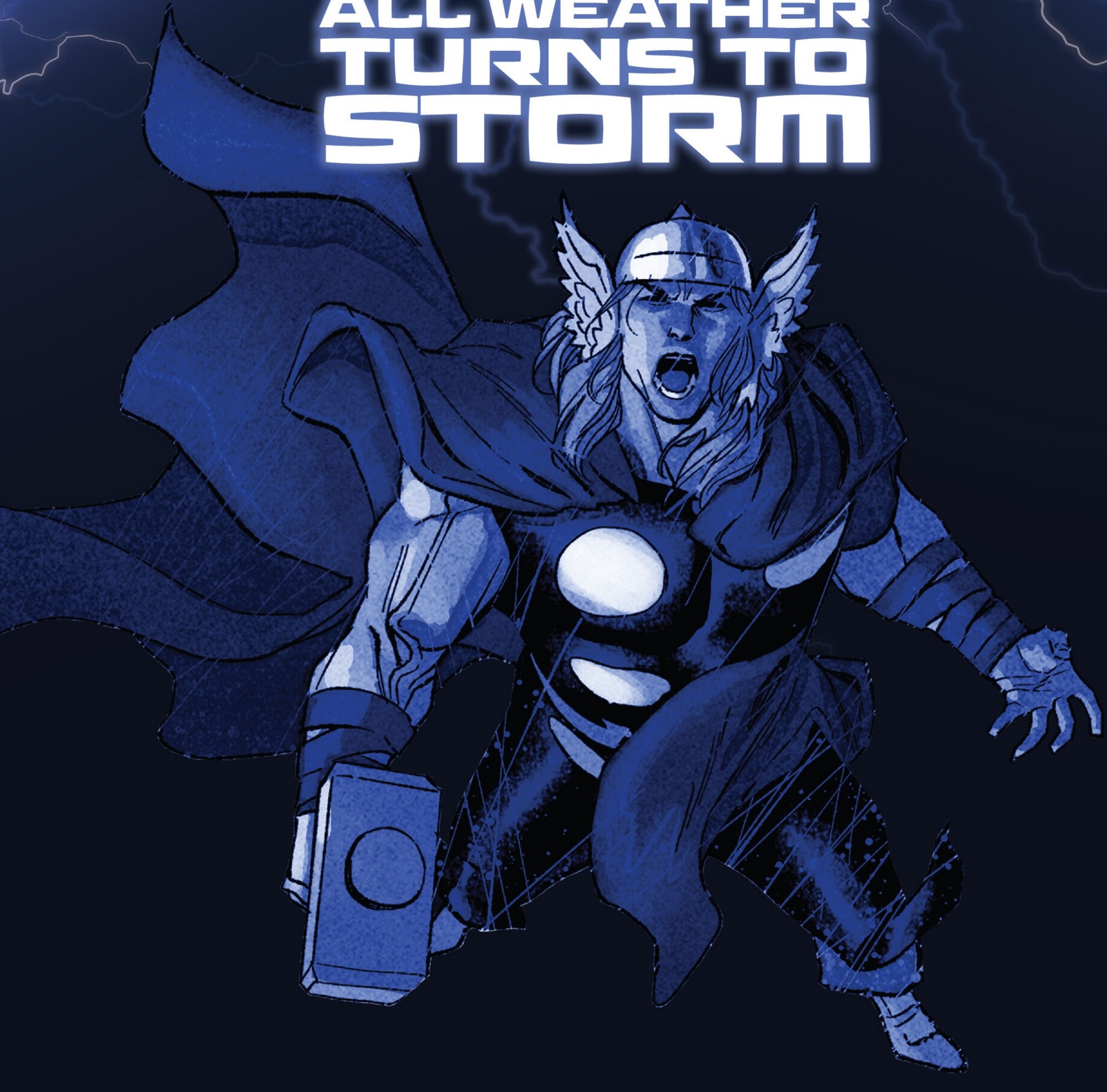

THE IMMORTAL THOR

ALL WEATHER TURNS TO STORM

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Would you know more?
Then sit with me around the secret fire, to hear the magic words.
Once upon a time... there were ten great realms, in a vast tree that was everything.
And the realm of gold was called Asgard.
A world of glory, where every rise was a grand saga, every fall a Ragnarok.
A land of gods, heady with deep meaning... where even broken things were beautiful.
LADY SIF.
HOW GOES THY VIGIL?
IT GOES, THOR. MY BROTHER'S DUTIES DID NOT END WITH HIS DEATH.
AND EVEN A SHATTERED RAINBOW BRIDGE MUST BE GUARDED FROM...
...OH.
SHOULD I BE WORRIED?

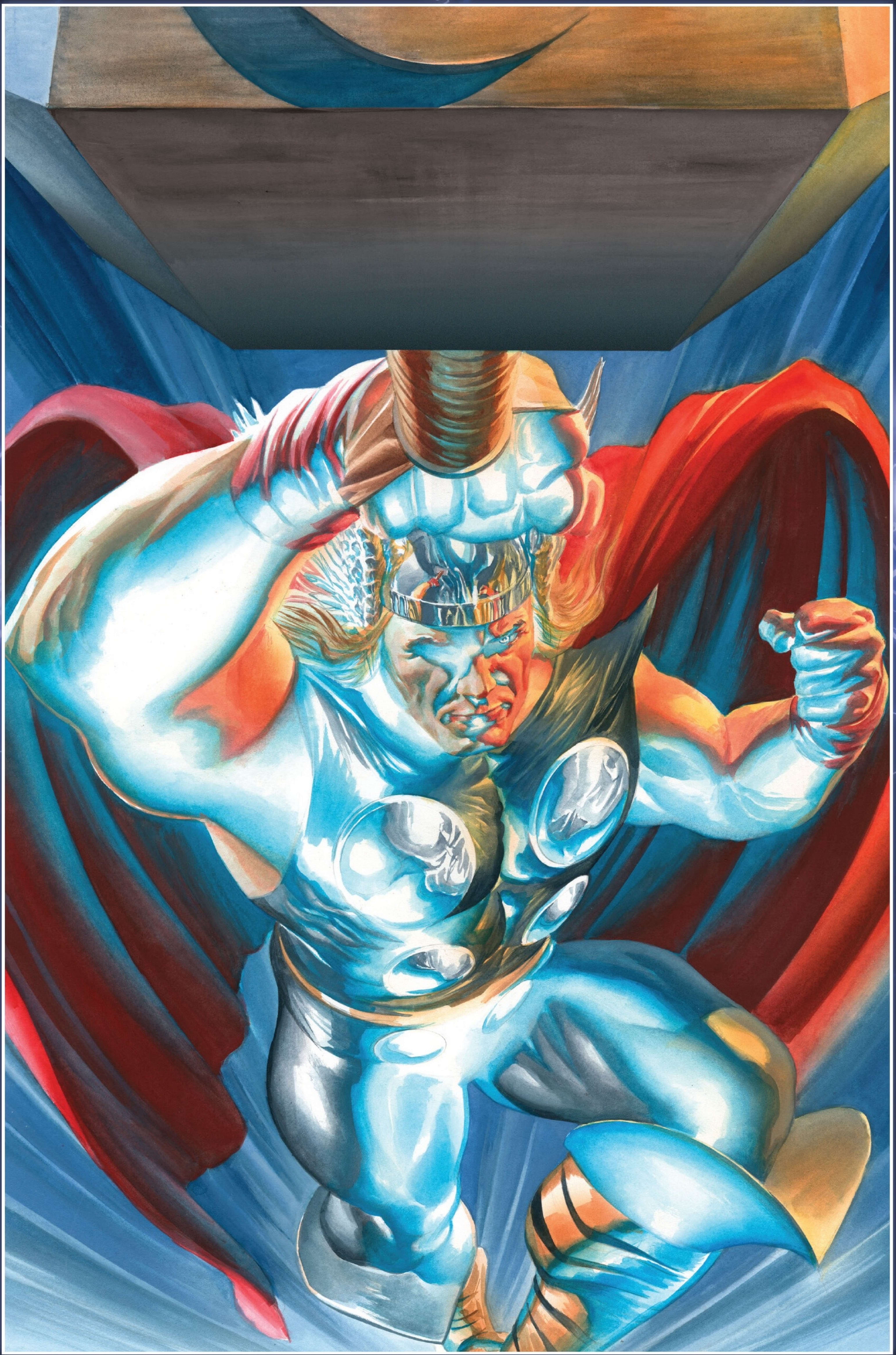
DO THE HIGH ADVENTURES OF TIMES PAST THREATEN TO LURE YOU FROM YOUR THRONE?
HA!
'TIS TRUE-- MY OBLIGATIONS HAVE GROWN SINCE LAST I WORE THESE TRAPPINGS. AS HAVE I.
AND THOUGH THAT JOURNEY TO MYSELF HAS BEEN LONG... A ROAD BESET WITH DOUBTS AND FEARS, AS SHARP AND CRUEL AS BRIARS...
...THE JOURNEY IS DONE. THE PRIZE IS WON. I AM KING OF ASGARD--AND WILL NOT SHIRK THAT DUTY.
BUT I WOULD REASSURE MY PEOPLE THAT--KING THOUGH I MAY BE--
--I AM STILL THOR.
I'LL NOT DENY THAT ROLE EITHER.

IF THE CAPE FITS, AS THEY SAY.
AND I CONFESS--IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME SINCE THINE HAMMER SEEMED LIGHT IN THINE HAND...
'TIS TRULY MY HAMMER NOW--THE HAMMER OF THE ALL-FATHER. ITS MAGIC IS MINE TO COMMAND, AND MINE TO BESTOW.
MJOLNIR HAS BECOME A PART OF ME...
Whosoever holds this hammer, if they be worthy, shall possess the power of... THOR
...AND PERHAPS THIS OLD FRIEND DESERVES ITS OWN NEW BEGINNING.
In that moment, Thor was decided...
...and the die was cast.
COME, THEN, MJOLNIR!
OPEN THE GATES OF THUNDER! CALL THE COSMIC LIGHTNING FROM BEYOND THE SKY ITSELF--
--AND WITHIN IT--BE REBORN!
Then the Odin-Storm struck--the full might and majesty of Thor All-Father.
The price of such power was the Odin-Sleep, which would lay Thor low for many days...

...yet in this endless moment, the hammer of Thor bled molten gold...
...and Thor felt a long-forgotten weight lift from his soul.
IT IS DONE! THE HAMMER IS MENDED!
MJOLNIR IS REFORGED!
STRONGER THAN EVER, BY MY SIGHT.
BUT I WONDER IF 'TIS WISE TO USE THE ALL-POWER LIKE THIS...TO TURN BACK THE WHEEL OF FATE...
SOMETIMES THE WHEEL OF FATE TURNS ALL AROUND, LADY SIF.
SOMETIMES IT BRINGS US HOME.
WHOSOEVER HO
THIS HAMMER, I
THEY BE WORTHY
SHALL POSSESS THE
POWER OF...
THOR
But home was Asgard--where all things have meaning.
And the echo of those words was dark thunder in a far-off land...

...but that is tomorrow's tale.
WOULD YOU KNOW MORE?

1



"HE IS SATED WITH THE LAST
BREATH OF DYING MEN.

THE GOD'S SEAT HE WITH RED
GORE DEFILES.

SWART IS THE SUNSHINE THEN
FOR SUMMERS AFTER.

ALL WEATHER TURNS TO STORM.

UNDERSTAND YE YET, OR WHAT?"

– THE ELDER EDDAS OF SAEMUND SIGFUSSON

If you would understand, then open your mind.
There are ten realms on the World Tree. Ten realms of gods and magicians, of elves and dwarves, of angels and dead souls.
Ten is the number-- ten there are.
So here was no realm, as we count realms.
And those here were not Gods, as we count Gods.
For the Gods are creatures of story. And a story is a shadow-play, cast on a cave wall.
What casts the shadow, then?
What could block the light?
THE WHEEL...
...TURNS.
Understand ye yet, or what?

And what of Asgard?
What of the realm of the Aesir, the hero-gods of legend, of whom the eddas were sung? What of the Golden Realm?
Golden no longer. Now the realm was silver, rimed with ice and buried under snow...
...for winter had come to the land of the gods.
ATTACK, MY FROST GIANTS! SO COMMANDS SKRYMIR --WIZARD OF JOTUNHEIM AND THY TRUE AND RIGHTFUL KING!
BRING OUR FOES THE NIGHT WITHOUT A MORNING-- THE FROZEN SLEEP FROM WHICH THERE IS NO WAKING! FOR DEATH IS COLD, DOGS OF ASGARD!
AS COLD AS OUR RESOLVE!
IT SEEMS SKRYMIR IS AS BLUSTERY AS THE WINTER WIND ITSELF...
'TIS NO JEST, FANDRAL-- AND THE JOTUNN MAGE IS NO JESTER.
HE HAS MAGIC ENOUGH TO SURVIVE THE LOSS OF HIS HEAD AND GROW A NEW ONE BACK...
AYE, HOGUN! AND TO CHILL THE REALM ETERNAL LIKE A MORTAL ICEBOX!
I FEAR THE WARRIORS FOUR MAY END THEIR LEGEND AS A FOUR-COURSE FROZEN DINNER! WHAT SAY YOU, HILDEGARDE?
I SAY THAT NO SOLDIER OF ASGARD NEED FEAR, VOLSTAGG...
...WHEN THEIR KING STANDS BESIDE THEM!
LOOK UP!
And the King of Asgard had indeed come to battle.
But he did not stand.

He soared!
For in his right hand was **Mjolnir, the Crusher**--the great enchanted **Hammer of Gods**, that flew as the arrow and came at his call.
Many names had he. **Vuer**, some called him, and **Hlroddi** also. Before the first eddas were sung, the talesmiths called him **Thunderer** around their ancient fires. **Avenger** and **All-Father** were his titles.
But there was **one** name that **all** knew him by--**one name** that meant fear to the wicked and hope to the good. **One name** toasted in the halls of Valhalla, where his father Odin now resided.
And that name...was **MIGHTY THOR!**

SO! SKRYMIR UNLEASHES HIS FULL MIGHT AND MAGIC UPON THE REALM ETERNAL--AND ASGARD RESPONDS WITH ONE LONE GOD!
WHAT WILL YOUR WARRIORS DO, I WONDER--WHEN I WEAR THEIR KING'S HALF-CHEWED HEAD KNOTTED IN MY FROSTY BEARD?
EH?
I AM IN NO MOOD TO BANDY WORDS, MY FRIEND--SO I WILL SPEAK MY PIECE PLAIN.
I AM DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED IN THEE.
YOU...ARE DISAPPOINTED?
SKRYMIR FROST-MAGE TURNS ALL TO A DESERT OF ICE AND SNOW--AND YOU ARE DISAPPOINTED?
ALL-FATHER INDEED! WILL YOU TUT-TUT AT ME NOW, THOR? SEND ME TO BED WITHOUT SUPPER?
HA-HAAA! TRULY, THE ODINSON HAS BECOME KING OF COMEDY!
MY WORDS WERE NOT FOR YOU, SKRYMIR.
I AM SPEAKING...
...TO THEE.

MY UNFAITHFUL SERVANT.
...
THE SKY...?
A STORM OF SNOW IS STILL A STORM--AND STILL MINE TO COMMAND.
SO WHAT MEAN YOU BY COMING HERE AT A CLUMSY HEDGE-WIZARD'S BIDDING?
WHAT MEAN YOU, SPREADING ICY CHAOS IN YOUR LIEGE-LORD'S DOMAIN?
YOU ARE BUT A LITTLE BLIZZARD--SO, THIS ONCE, THOR SHALL BE MERCIFUL.
BEGONE FROM HERE.
AND WE WILL SAY NO MORE.

AAAAHHH!
THE SCORCHING SUN! THE SUMMER'S HEAT! ALREADY THE SNOW BEGINS TO MELT-- AND SO SHALL WE!
RUN! RUN FROM THE SKY-FATHER--LEST HE BE DISAPPOINTED WITH US!
HOLD FAST, YOU CRETINS--

STILL THY TONGUE, SKRYMIR. LET THEM GO.
THOSE WARRIORS YOU BEGUILED ARE BUT YOUNG GIANTS, SWAYED BY HONEY-SWEET TALES OF BATTLING THE ANCIENT FOE.
HAD I LOOSED THE ARMIES OF ASGARD, THEY WOULD HAVE CUT SUCH STRIPLINGS DOWN LIKE WHEAT...
...AND I'VE NO STOMACH FOR A SLAUGHTER, OLD FOE.
NOT ON SUCH A FINE SUMMER'S DAY.
BECAUSE YOU ARE WEAK, THOR! AND ALL KNOW IT!
WHERE ALL-FATHER ODIN BROUGHT HIS WONDROUS WRATH TO THE TEN REALMS-- THOR SPEAKS SOFT AS A MOUSE!
WELL, SKRYMIR HAS THY MEASURE!
SKRYMIR WHO TOOK THE NAME UTGARD-LOKI, FOR THE MAGUS OF THE ANCIENT TALES! SKRYMIR WHOSE MAGIC MAKES BEASTS OF MEN!
WE SHALL SEE IF YOUR VAUNTED ARMIES FOLLOW YOU, FOOL-KING--
--WHEN MY SPELLS REMAKE YOU AS THE SCUTTLING RODENT YOU ARE!

IF YOU CAN HIT ME WITH THEM!
I APPEAL ONCE MORE TO THY WISER NATURE, SKRYMIR! I ENTREAT YOU--LEAVE AS THOU CAME!
THOR IS AFRAID AT LAST, THEN! BEGGING FOR HIS LIFE AS HE PRANCES LIKE A CIRCUS STEED!
DANCE AS PRETTILY AS YOU WISH--I ONLY HAVE TO HIT YOU ONCE!
TRUE WORDS.
AND IF IT COULD SPEAK...
...MJOLNIR WOULD SAY THE SAME.
And some would say the hammer did speak, in that moment.
Some would say...

RAKAKROOOOMM

WHUDD
...'twas most eloquent.
THAPP
WELL STRUCK, my liege!
'TWAS BEST TO END IT QUICKLY, FANDRAL.
AND YET, I WOULD THAT THIS HAD GONE ANOTHER WAY...
SKRYMIR GREW HIS HEAD BACK ONCE BEFORE, MY LORD. I DOUBT HE DIED THE TRUE DEATH TODAY.
THE VERY DEFINITION OF COLD COMFORT, HILDEGARDE. AND SKRYMIR'S ASSAULT SIGNIFIES A GREATER PROBLEM ON THE HORIZON.
THESE WERE GIANTS OF JOTUNHEIM--AND JOTUNHEIM IS RULED BY LOKI, MY SIBLING.
WHAT IS THEIR ROLE IN THIS? DID LOKI TRY TO PREVENT THIS INCURSION...OR ENCOURAGE IT...?
WHY NOT ASK ME YOURSELF, THOR?

I'VE BEEN HERE THE WHOLE TIME!
TA-DA!
LOKI!
THE TRICKSTER RETURNS--LOOKING MORE CHAOTIC THAN EVER.
A GRIM TIDING.
WITH YOU, WHAT ISN'T?
IGNORE HIM, LOKI. YOU LOOK GREAT.
DASHING AS EVER, FANDRAL...
ENOUGH PLEASANTRIES, LOKI. WE MUST SPEAK, ONE MONARCH TO ANOTHER.
YOU ARE RULER OF JOTUNHEIM--
OH, THAT.
DIDN'T WORK OUT.
WHAT?
LOKI--IT WAS YOU WHO CLAIMED THAT THRONE! AND A THRONE BRINGS RESPONSIBILITY!
YOU CANNOT SIMPLY ABANDON WHAT YOU BEGAN--
MAYBE YOU CAN'T, BROTHER. DON'T PROJECT YOUR NEUROSES ONTO ME.

AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE JOTUNN CAN RULE THEMSELVES-- AND SO CAN I.
BURI'S BONES.
SO BE IT, THEN. I'LL NOT FORCE YOUR RULE ON JOTUNHEIM-- ANY MORE THAN I WOULD MY OWN.
BUT I HAVE STRONG MEMORIES OF PRIOR MISCHIEFS, LOKI--AND I WOULD KNOW WHAT BRINGS YOUR WANDERING FEET BACK TO MY KINGDOM...
WHAT ELSE? YOU'RE GOD OF THE STORM, THOR-- I'M GOD AND GODDESS OF THE STORY.
THE SKALD OF ALL THE REALMS.
WHERE ELSE WOULD I GO BUT WHERE THE STORIES ARE?
And this was true, in its fashion--but not all the truth. For every storyteller is liar, trickster and traitor.
Our first allegiance is always to the tale.
To trust us is to risk your very heart.
HA! VERY WELL, LOKI. WE'LL CLEAR YOUR MESS UP AS WE GO.
I'M GLAD YOU'RE HOME.
Understand ye yet?
You will.
...
ME TOO.
NOW, HOW ABOUT I WHIP US UP A NICE RAINBOW BRIDGE?

BEHOLD THE BIFROST-- ONCE ASGARD'S GREATEST TREASURE.
NOW ITS RUIN MARKS MY GREATEST FAILURE AS THE ALL-FATHER.
YOU ONCE SAID IT MIGHT TAKE TEN THOUSAND YEARS TO RESTORE THESE SHATTERED FRAGMENTS, LOKI.
AND YET NOW YOU HAVE THE POWER TO...WHIP IT UP? WHAT DARK BARGAIN HAVE YOU MADE...?
THERE'S A SAYING ABOUT GIFT HORSES AND MOUTHS, THOR. BUT IF YOU MUST KNOW...
...GAZE UPON THE WAND OF WUTEVAR! JAM-PACKED WITH MYSTERY MAGIC FROM THE ELDERS OF THE UNIVERSE!
I FOUND IT IN THE COLLECTOR'S VAULTS--DURING A MINOR ADVENTURE I WON'T TROUBLE YOU WITH--
AYE--'TIS BETTER I DO NOT KNOW SOME OF YOUR ESCAPADES...
MAKE THE ATTEMPT, THEN. I WILL STAND GUARD IN CASE THIS BACKFIRES.
LIKE THE LAST TIME...
It would not.
For the "wand" was only whittled driftwood, a prop with a pretty story attached...and that lie hid a deeper magic.

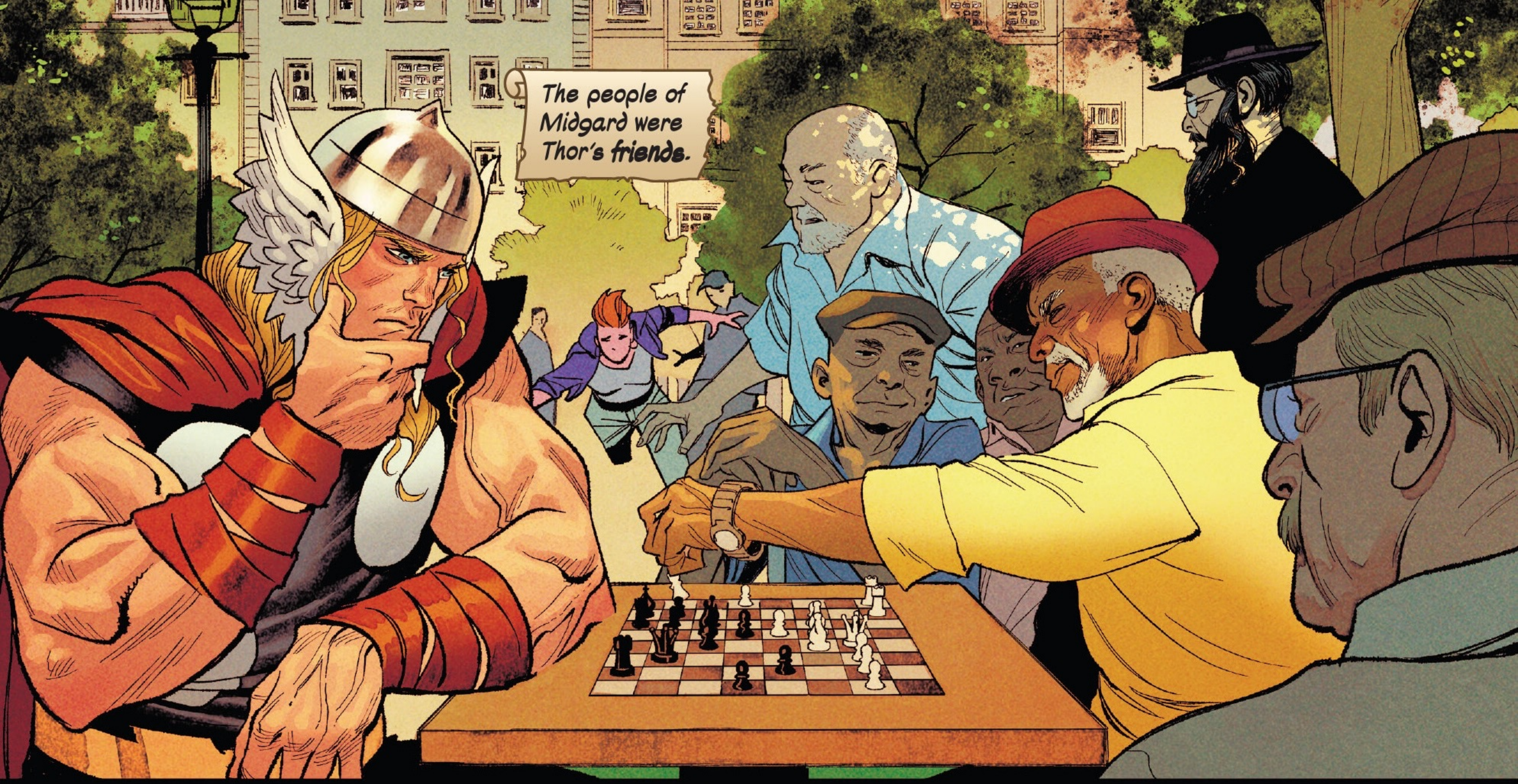
At the heart of that magic was a question--carried like an ember in a clamshell from creation's highest point.
We are told what is possible for us. What is allowable. Who we are, who we can be, who we shall be.
The stories have their patterns. The Gods have their Ragnarok. Even Thor has a Black Winter hanging over him.
But...what if spring could come again? What if green shoots grew where nothing could?
What if the future was unwritten, the present uncontained? What if we could go anywhere, do anything, be anyone?
What if we were free?
All of us. Gods and mortals. Me and you.
What couldn't we do, on the day all our cages open? What would that look like? Tell me, if you can.
What does the bridge to anywhere look like?

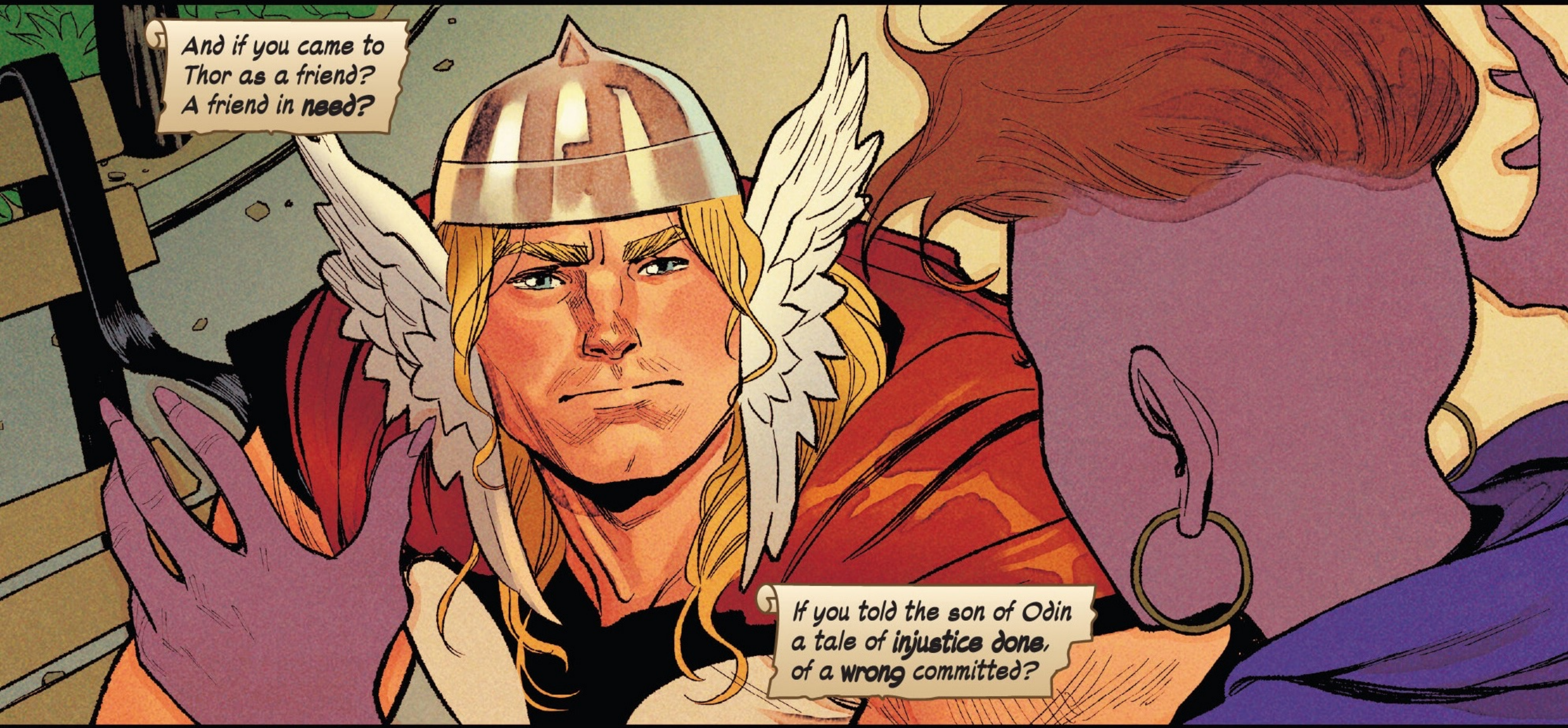
Does it look like this?
Magic is symbol and metaphor. Stories turn moments into power-- moments like this--
BY ALL THE GODS...
--and a teller of tales can harness that power, even in the moment.
But no journey is without trial. No spring comes without the winter.
No magic is without cost.

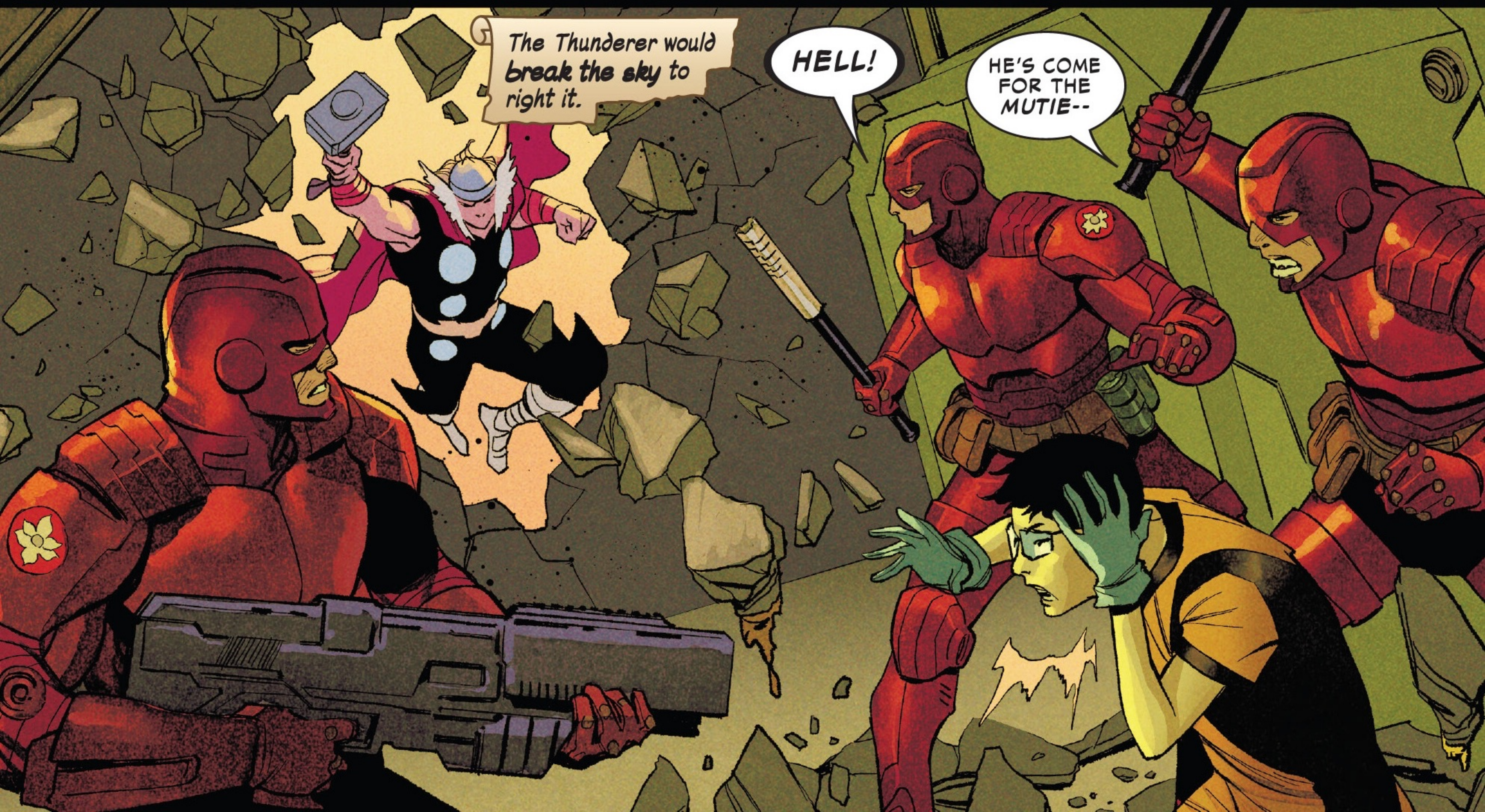
I'm sorry, Thor.
I ALMOST DO NOT DARE TO TOUCH IT...
'TIS EVEN STRONGER THAN IT WAS BEFORE, THOR. I DOUBT IT WILL BREAK AGAIN...
YET IT SEEMS AS FRAGILE AS SPUN GLASS-- AS FRAGILE AS JOY.
I SWORE AN OATH TO MY FATHER IN VALHALLA TO DO LESS BROODING ON MY THRONE, SIF.
BUT TO SEE ASGARD'S RAINBOW AGAIN... TO FEEL IT UNDER MY FEET...
I'LL ADMIT-- IT'S EASIER TO GUARD SOMETHING THAT ACTUALLY EXISTS.
HA HA HA!
OHH... NOW THE BROODING IS DONE, SIF. NOW MY HEART IS LIGHT AGAIN.
A NEW CHAPTER FOR ASGARD HAS BEGUN-- AND WE HAVE OUR OWN SKALD TO THANK FOR WEAVING IT.
YOU HAVE MY ETERNAL GRATITUDE...
...LOKI...?
I'm so sorry.

GONE. AS SUDDENLY AS THEY CAME.
SOMETHING IN THAT TROUBLES ME...
"AS FRAGILE AS JOY" INDEED, THOR ODINSON.
NO SOONER ARE ASGARD'S PROBLEMS SOLVED THAN YOU CHASE AFTER FRESH ONES.
I FEAR YOU WILL NEVER BE COMFORTABLE ON YOUR THRONE, AS LONG AS IT DEMANDS SO MUCH SITTING STILL...
YOU KNOW ME FAR TOO WELL, MY LADY. WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR SUCH A MALADY?
WHAT ELSE? WE HAVE A BIFROST AGAIN, THOR.
AND YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH FOR ASGARD FOR ONE DAY.
IT'S TIME TO SEE TO YOUR OTHER HOME...
ONCE AGAIN, YOU SHOW MORE WISDOM THAN ANY ALL-FATHER, SIF.
SO MOTE IT BE!
LET THE GOD OF THUNDER RIDE THE RAINBOW BRIDGE ONCE MORE--

--TO MIDGARD!
Does it seem **strange** for a King's heart to **sing** as he leaves his land? No Asgardian thought it so.
For Thor's people knew him well and loved him better--and they knew his soul was of **two worlds**. His father's **Golden Realm** on high...
...and the mundane realm of **Midgard**, watched o'er and loved by the Goddess **Gaea**... who was Thor's **mother**.
Mighty Thor was his mother's son--and perhaps his love for the whole world exceeded even **hers**...
...but even so, none could argue that there was not a certain city he loved **best**.
And the mortals loved him **back** as fondly and as fiercely...
...though not as a **God**.
Thor had no **worshippers** here--and he **wished** for none.


The people of Midgard were Thor's **friends**.


And if you came to Thor as a friend? A friend in **need**?
If you told the son of Odin a tale of **injustice done**, of a **wrong** committed?


The Thunderer would **break the sky** to right it.
HELL!
HE'S COME FOR THE MUTIE--

And nothing--not the laws of mortals, nor the magic of Gods--would sway him from the path until justice was done.
GET UP, DOGS!
GET UP SO THOR MAY SMITE THEE AGAIN!
CYCLOPS WAS RIGHT
And after such battles came the revelry.
SODA
For wherever hope and kindness still lived, there was no place the God of Thunder was unwelcome...
...and yet, for all that, he was still of two worlds. Two worlds and neither.
And when the night came, Thor found himself in need of solitude.
A place to be alone...

...with his *thoughts*.
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?
HOW LONG SINCE I SIMPLY STOOD HERE AND LET MY MIND *ROAM* THUS?
IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY. TIME ON MIDGARD HAS *ALWAYS* BEEN MERCURIAL, RUSHING LIKE A *RIVER*... THE *SUMMER* TO THE *AUTUMN*...
...AND OFTEN HAVE I RETURNED FROM SOME BRIEF-SEEMING SOJOURN TO FIND *YEARS* HAVE PASSED.
AND MY MORTAL FRIENDS ARE WARMING MORTAL *GRAVES*.
HO, ERIK THORVALDSSON-- WHERE VOYAGE YOU *NOW?* DOES VALHALLA'S FEAST *SATE* YOUR WANDERLUST, OR DO YOU SAIL THE SEAS OF *HEL?*
UNDER WHAT SKY MAY I *FIND* YOU, IYA NEHANDA? WHAT FAR STAR DOES BRAVE *MAR-VELL* NOW ORBIT?
BEND, UNIVERSE, TO *TELL* ME! *THE ALL-FATHER WOULD KNOW!*

LIKE WILY CNUT, I DEMAND WHAT CANNOT BE--TO PROVE NOT MY POWER, BUT MY LIMITS.
THERE ARE FORCES TO WHICH EVEN A GOD MUST BOW.
YET I AM SECURE IN MYSELF, AT LEAST. THAT BATTLE IS DONE WITH.
MJOLNIR IS WHOLE, MY COMPANION ONCE MORE--AND THE WEIGHT OF THE HAMMER IS NO LONGER THE MEASURE OF ME.
FOR AS ALL-FATHER, THE MAGIC IS MINE--
--AND I DECIDE WHO IS WORTHY OF IT.
I NO LONGER HAVE THE LUXURY OF RAILING AGAINST MY FATHER'S COMMANDMENTS. I MUST NOW COMMAND MYSELF...
...AND THAT IS NOT SO EASY AS COMMANDING THE SKY ABOVE ME.
HO, MY SERVANT! HEED THY LORD'S CALL!
THIS WEATHER IS FIT FOR THUNDER GODS--BUT TOO MUCH FOR THE MORTALS IN MY CARE!
THE MASTER OF STORMS ORDERS THEE--BEGONE FROM HERE!
AND LET THERE BE CLEAR SKIES AGAIN--
But Thor had made an error.

BRA-KRA-KOOOMMMM
For it was not **his** thunder to command.

Thor was only God of the **Storm**.
Who was God of the **Superstorm?**
What God would reign when **hurricane winds** tear the structures of mankind from the Earth?
What God condemned humanity's **darkness**, instead of celebrating humanity's **light?**
What God would be to the **Aesir** as the Aesir are to **mortals?**
OD'S BLOOD...
And from what dark world would it come?
THE WHEEL...

...HATH TURNED!
TOO LONG HAS THIS WORLD STAGNATED! TOO LONG HAVE YOU CHOSEN ILLUSION OVER CHANGE!
YOU SLEEPWALK THROUGH A DREAM OF LIFE--BUT I AM THE BLOODY AWAKENING!
I COME TO YOU FROM UTGARD, THE STORIED LAND, THAT IS THE LAND-OF-TRUE-THINGS! I COME TO SHATTER THY FALSE WORLD APART!

AND MY NAME IS TORANOS--
--THE UTGARD-THOR!
And then did Mighty Thor know fear.

He recalled Skrymir's **boasting**--of how he had worn the name of **Utgard-Loki** as a signifier of **great power.**
UXXON
And deep in a memory from a time long past, he recalled his **own** journey to the Utgard-lands...
...the **shadow-lands,** home to those who sit above even the **Gods.**
And if the Gods were as **mortals** to them?
What, then, of **mortals?**

Yet Thor was no mere mortal...and no mere God.
And his fear was but a fleeting whisper, compared to his righteous wrath.
TORANOS! HEAR ME!
HEAR ME, SON OF UTGARD! FOR YOU FACE THE ODIN-SON NOW, IN HIS OWN TRUE ELEMENT--
--AND I CALL UPON MY FATHER'S MIGHT! THE ODIN-POWER THAT NOW FLOWS IN MY OWN VEINS!
FOR I AM THOR THE GAEA-SON, WHO DEFENDS THE MIDGARD-LANDS!
I AM THOR THE AVENGER, WHO BRINGS JUSTICE FOR INNOCENT BLOOD!

AND MOST OF ALL, I AM THOR THE ALL-FATHER--
KRAKATOOOM
--AND I SUMMON THE ALL-POWER AGAINST YOU NOW!
Then the very Earth did **tremble** at the war just now beginning...

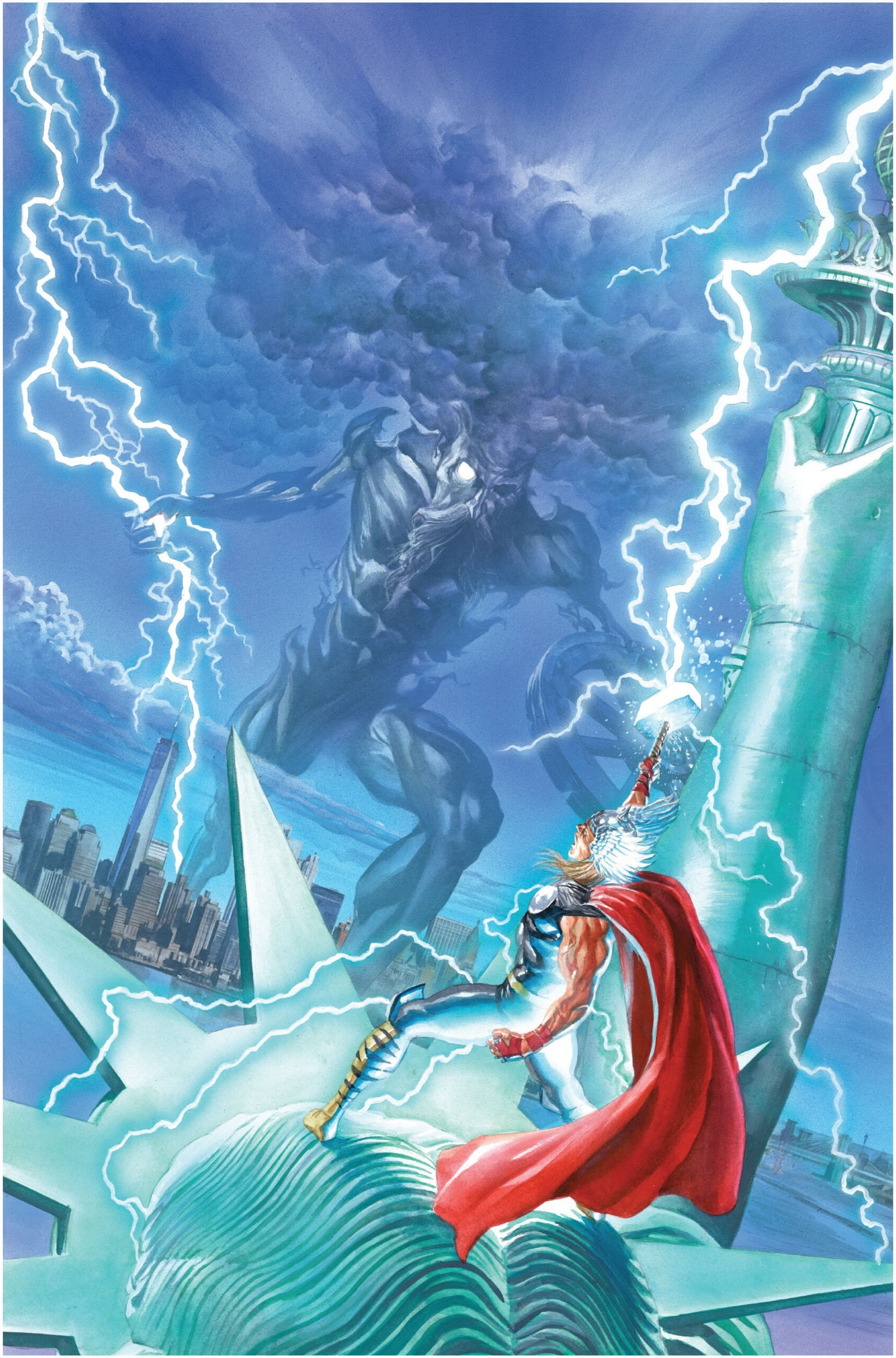
...and that note of doom reached far beyond the Midgard-plane.
If you would understand, then open your mind.
THE WHEEL HAS TURNED.
THE WHEEL TURNS.
Here was no realm, as we count realms.
OUR BROTHER TORANOS WALKS IN THE WORLD AGAIN-- AND ONLY YOUR SON BARS THE PATH OF HIS RAGE.
IS ALL AS YOU WISHED IT TO BE...
And these were not Gods, as we count Gods.
...SISTER GAEA?
LITTLE IS AS I WISHED IT TO BE, BROTHER.
BUT I WOULD NOT HAVE UNLOCKED WHAT I SEALED LONG MILLENNIA AGO IF THERE WERE OTHER OPTIONS.
AYE. YOU WELL RECALL THE LAST TIME WE WERE ALL ABROAD--ECHOES OF IT RING IN DARK LEGEND. SOME YET USE OUR NAMES AS TALISMANS.
I RECALL THE AMUSING SKRYMIR... AND DID NOT THE THUNDERER FIGHT A TORANOS IN HIS PAST?
TANARUS. A TROLL MADE A CORRUPTION OF THE NAME.
HA! A LITTLE TROLL!

THOR WILL BE TESTED BY MORE THAN TROLLS NOW. AS HE WAS BEFORE, LONG AGO--WHEN HE JOURNEYED TO THE UTGARD-HALL IN HIS YOUTH.
AND AS BEFORE, IF HE BREAKS--IF HE FALLS--IF HE FAILS TO BE WHAT HE MUST BE--
--IT WILL MARK THE END OF ALL THAT IS.
THE RULE IS CLEAR. ALL THINGS MUST LIVE AND GROW--OR WITHER AND DIE.
THIS AGE OF MARVELS CAN BE NO EXCEPTION.
TRUE INDEED. AND THE OUTCOME CANNOT BE PREDICTED--FOR ODIN'S FOUNDLING IS AT THE DOOR. THE TRICKSTER, WHO PLAYS NO FAVORITE SAVE FOR THEIR TALE.
THOR MAY NOW FACE LOKI'S TEST AS WELL...
HA!
HA! HA! HA! LOKI, YOU SAY! I REMEMBER LOKI!
A TALESMITH, ARE THEY NOW? HOW PRECIOUS! A SKALD, TO JOIN THE TROLL AND THE FROST-WIZARD IN OUR CAST OF UNDERSTUDIES!
AH, GAEA... MY SISTER, MY JAILER, MY ANCIENT FOE...YOU BRING SWEET LAUGHTER TO THE HALL OF UTGARD.
FOR IF THOR CAN BE TESTED BY LOKI...

...THEN THE UTGARD-LOKI WILL DESTROY HIM UTTERLY.

ALL WEATHER TURNS TO STORM

2



“Trembles yggdrasil’s ash
yet standing;

groans that aged tree,

and the jötun is loosed.”

– The Elder Eddas of Saemund Sigfusson

Knowledge is power.
MIGHTY YGGDRASIL!
TREE OF LIFE AND DEATH!
So say the mortals of **Midgard**, in their attempts to navigate the prisons of fear and ignorance they build around themselves.
What, then, of the **Odin-Knowledge?**
ODIN, SON OF **BOR**, OFFERS YOU... **AAAAHHH!!!**
...THIS SACRIFICE...
...IN EXCHANGE FOR **WISDOM!**
The **higher wisdom** granted to Odin, Father of Gods, by **Yggdrasil the World Ash** in this moment when the stars were young.

Yggdrasil, whose roots twine and twist beneath the feet of mortals.
YES
Whose highest point is the very crown of creation.
Upon whose boughs hang the ten realms of the Gods.
THIS IS THE LESSON
THIS IS THE PARABLE
THE STORY ALWAYS CHANGES
THE MEANING ALWAYS REMAINS
THERE IS ALWAYS A SACRIFICE
ALWAYS A COST, BOR-SON
FOR THE WINTER TO END
FOR SPRING TO COME AGAIN
AAAAAHHHH!
The knowledge beyond knowledge...and the power beyond power.
To be passed down like treasure, from All-Father to All-Son...and used seldom and sparingly...
YOU HAVE MADE YOUR SACRIFICE, BOR-SON
AND IN TIME TO COME
YOUR CHILDREN WILL MAKE THEIRS
...for all power has a price.

And Thor could *feel* the price of his power *now*...
FOLLY ON FOLLY!
...as he called on his father's magic--now his *own*--to battle he who called himself *the Thor of Utgard.*
KRA-KOOOOM
YOU WOULD STRIKE *ME* WITH THE STORM, PUNY MICRO-GOD?
THE MEAGER LIGHTNINGS YOU COMMAND ARE *NOTHING* TO ONE SUCH AS I!
FOR I AM *TORANOS*--WHO WAS *GOD OF THUNDER* WHEN THE THUNDER *FIRST SPOKE!*
TORANOS--

--WHO HOLDS THE WHEEL OF FATE IN HIS HAND!
WHOOOOOSH
HE SPEAKS THE TRUTH!
EVEN WITH THE ODIN-POWER ADDED TO MINE, HE PROVES TOO MUCH FOR ME! AND THE ALL-POWER CARRIES ITS OWN DREAD PRICE...
THOOM
...FOR TO USE IT IS TO SUMMON THE ALL-SLEEP!
ALREADY, I FEEL THE WEARINESS OF AGES STEALING O'ER MY BONES...SLOWING MY REFLEXES...
...WHILE VAST TORANOS IS AS FRESH AS EVER!
THE WHEEL TURNS FOR MIDGARD, THOR! BUT FIRST, IT MUST TURN FOR YOU--
--FOR THE TIME OF SMALL GODS IS OVER!

BUT IF I CANNOT YET DEFEAT THIS BEING, I CAN PERHAPS DELAY HIM.
THIS IS NO LONGER ODIN'S POWER--'TIS THE THOR-POWER NOW, LINKED TO MY WISDOM.
AND IF I APPLY THAT WISDOM...
HEAR ME, TORANOS! ELDER STORM-GOD THOU MAY BE--BUT I AM THOR SKY-FATHER, WHO IS MIDGARD'S OWN SON!
AND WHEN I TELL THE SKY OF EARTH TO OPEN--
--OPEN IT SHALL!
KRA-KROOOMMM
The lightning split the sky...
...and Toranos laughed.
HA! THE GOD OF ANTS SENDS A SINGLE SPARK AGAINST ME--
--AND CANNOT EVEN HIT ME WITH THAT!

Thor merely smiled.
And though he was no trickster-god...
BEFORE YOU MAKE FURTHER JESTS AT MY EXPENSE, OLD GOD--DEIGN TO TURN YOUR HEAD A LITTLE.
FOR BEHIND YOU IS A MOST FASCINATING VIEW.
...there was yet a hint of mischief in it.
For Thor had "opened the sky" indeed.
THE YAWNING VOID--
AYE--MJOLNIR HAS E'ER BEEN ABLE TO BREAK OPEN THE DOORS BETWEEN WORLDS!
AND WITH MY FATHER'S POWER ADDED, IT MAY OPEN A DOOR LARGE ENOUGH FOR EVEN THEE! THUS, ALL THAT NOW REMAINS--
--IS TO SEND YOU THROUGH IT!
The gale winds pushed and pulled, within and without--

--for the portal the Odinson had conjured led to the farthest shore of Eternity itself.
Yet even as the vacuum of space tore at him, fearsome Toranos clung on...
YOU SEEK TO BANISH ME WITH WIND, FOOL-KING?
MORE FOOL THAN KING, THEN-- FOR I AM THE WIND!
...and likewise, the All-Sleep's grip on Thor grew only tighter.
MY LIMITS ARE BEYOND YOUR KEN--
NNHH...
Until one Storm-God must surely fall...
--AND YOURS, ALL TOO APPARENT!
AYE! AS APPARENT AS I WISH THEM TO BE-- TO MAKE YOU DROP YOUR GUARD!
BLOW, WINDS OF MIDGARD-- AS YOU HAVE NEVER BLOWN BEFORE--
--AND SWEEP THIS ANCIENT CONTAGION FROM THY MIDST!

WHHROOOMM
'TIS **DONE!** THE OPENED SKY IS **SEALED** AGAIN--AND TORANOS IS **GONE**... THOUGH ONLY FOR A **TIME.**
EVEN FROM THE FAR EDGE OF ALL THINGS, HE WILL **HUNT** ME FOR THIS INSULT--AND I AM IN **NO SHAPE** FOR THE **RETURN BOUT**...
...FOR THERE WAS MORE **TRUTH** IN MY FEIGNED EXHAUSTION THAN I CARED TO **ADMIT.**
THE MORE OF THE ALL-POWER I **SPEND**, THE LONGER AND DEEPER THE ALL-SLEEP WILL BE--AND **RESISTING** IT ONLY EXTENDS IT **FURTHER** WHEN IT COMES.
AND 'TIS A SLEEP I RISK **NEVER WAKING** FROM--FOR WHILE MY *"THORFORCE"* **RECHARGES**, I WILL BE VULNERABLE AS ANY **MORTAL.** A WISE MAN WOULD SEEK SOME PLACE OF **SAFETY.**
PERHAPS TORANOS WAS **RIGHT**, THEN. I **AM** MORE FOOL THAN KING.
BUT I WOULD BE A **POOR** SORT OF KING IF I LEFT THINGS AS THEY **ARE**...

THIS MORTAL CITY WAS CAUGHT IN TORANOS' ATTACK. EVEN FROM *HERE*, I CAN SEE THE DEVASTATION. HOW MANY ARE *DYING*? HOW MANY *DEAD?*
TORANOS CAME HERE BECAUSE *I* WAS HERE--HE ADMITTED AS MUCH. BEFORE THE *REST* OF MIDGARD, HIS WHEEL MUST TURN FOR *ME*...
WHO WOULD I BE IF I SIMPLY *FLEW AWAY* FROM WHAT HE WROUGHT IN *MY NAME?*
TO *WORK*, THEN.
AND DIFFICULT WORK *INDEED*, FOR USE OF THE ALL-POWER HAS *ALREADY* LEFT ME SPENT--YET I MUST USE IT *AGAIN*, AND VERY CAREFULLY.
FILTERING IT MOST *INTRICATELY* THROUGH THE HAMMER'S POWER OVER *TIME AND SPACE*--AND WITH A PRAYER TO MY HALF BROTHER *BRAGI*, GOD OF *POETRY*...
...FOR A CERTAIN POETRY IS REQUIRED FOR THIS TO *WORK*.
MAY A *GOD OF THE STORM* SUMMON THE CALM *BEFORE* IT? IT SEEMS *IMPOSSIBLE*...YET I MUST *TRY*.
WHAT OTHER CHOICE DO I HAVE?

Odin in Valhalla, be with me now...
Many a mortal has died climbing a mountain.
Exertion takes its toll. At the end of the ascent, what once seemed little effort can be more than the body can stand.
Imagine, then, climbing your mountain--and at the summit, finding a second mountain, higher than the first.
ROXXON
Which you must also climb--for lives are at stake, and you cannot rest.
Have you faced your mountain upon a mountain yet? If you have not, I hope it never comes.
But if you have... if you face it now... know this:
You have the courage of Thor.
Odin has blessed me--or Bragi, perhaps. It worked, at least partly.
The damage is undone--those trapped by rubble are freed, those injured may be reached and tended to.
But the dead remain dead. And, as Toranos' target, to stay here is to risk further loss of life.
Yet I cannot return to Asgard--to slumber in a bed while an Elder God lays siege to my people.
'Tis the job of the king to protect the realm... even, sometimes, by his absence.
At the Aesir King's command, Mjolnir whirled...again breaching the barriers between one space and another...

...to bring Thor to a place where none but **he** faced the looming danger.
The **Gray Area of the Moon**, built by the **Inhumans** as their place of refuge. Like the **Blue Area** on the opposite side, it held a pocket of **atmosphere**...and trace **weather** for a Storm-God to mold...
...but the Inhumans had left this territory **behind**. There were no people here to be harmed.
Save for Thor **himself**.
'TIS A **WORTHY** ARENA FOR A **BATTLE OF GODS**--OR **WOULD** BE, WERE THE BATTLE NOT **DONE** BEFORE IT BEGINS.
MY LIMBS **BUCKLE**--THE ANCIENT WEARINESS INVADES MY VERY BLOOD AND BONE. THE **ALL-SLEEP** IS UPON ME, STRONGER THAN **EVER**...
...AND I CAN NO LONGER HOLD IT **BACK**.
WHEN **TORANOS** COMES FOR ME, I WILL BE AS WEAK AS A SLUMBERING **BABE**--BARRING SOME **MIRACLE** OR **MAGIC**--
THOR?
And then, to that desolate place...

...came Loki.
WILL YOU TRUST ME?
WHAT...?
LOKI. FOR ONCE, YOUR TIMING IS EXCELLENT.
LADY SIF SAW MY PLIGHT, THEN?
WELL... NO.
BUT THEN, SHE'S THE GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE, NOT THE BABYSITTER OF THE ODINSON...
I FEAR EVEN THE SHARPNESS OF THY TONGUE CANNOT CUT THROUGH THIS FOG DESCENDING AROUND ME.
AN ANCIENT GOD CAME SEEKING MY LIFE--A PRELUDE TO DARK BUSINESS WITH MIDGARD, THE WHY OF WHICH I KNOW NOT. I FORCED HIM BACK WITH THE ALL-POWER...
...AND NOW YOU FACE THE ALL-SLEEP.
INDEED--YET I MUST STAY AWAKE A MOMENT LONGER AND INSTRUCT THEE.
THE FIRST TASK IS TO WARN THE GOLDEN REALM. ONCE THAT IS DONE, I WOULD FEEL NO SHAME IN ACCEPTING THE PROTECTION OF THY SORCERIES--
THOR.
YOU HAVE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION.
WILL YOU TRUST ME?

HMMPH. WHEN THE TRICKSTER ASKS FOR TRUST, IT OFT MEANS TROUBLE...
THIS IS IMPORTANT, THOR. YOU MUST ANSWER, AND IT MUST BE THE RIGHT ANSWER.
WILL YOU TRUST ME AS A LOYAL SUBJECT OF ASGARD?
LOKI...DID I NOT JUST NOW REQUEST THINE AID? THE WOUNDS BETWEEN US LEFT SCARS, BUT THEY HEALED LONG AGO.
YES, I TRUST YOUR LOYALTY.
GOOD. THAT'S GOOD.
WILL YOU TRUST ME AS YOUR SIBLING WHO LOVES YOU?
...OF COURSE. OF COURSE I DO.
WE ARE KIN, LOKI--I BROUGHT YOU BACK FROM DEATH BECAUSE I MISSED YOU. YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE A PLACE IN MY HEART.
YES. I TRUST YOU AS MY OWN BLOOD.
ONE MORE QUESTION, THOR.
LOKI, I AM ABOUT TO PASS OUT--
THIS ONE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT. ON THIS, THE FUTURE RESTS.
WILL YOU TRUST ME EVEN AS YOUR ENEMY?

WHAT?
Thor's blood was ice in his throat.
A thousand memories of evil deeds and evil days crashed upon him like a wave, drowning even his weariness.
What would this open the door to? What would it bring, what would it *cost?* Whatever this was, he could not permit it. He **would** not.
But Loki said it was important.
And in Thor's heart...
...he had **already** made his answer.
...
YES.
YES, LOKI. *EVEN* AS MY ENEMY, I TRUST YOU.
SO BE WHAT THOU MUST BE.
AND DO WHAT THOU MUST DO.

GREETINGS, THOR.
IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME, HASN'T IT?
... A LONG TIME.
AND IF THAT TIME HAS COME AGAIN, THEN SO IT MUST GO...
...BUT I HAVE FOUGHT ONE WAR TODAY--AND EXHAUSTED MYSELF IN FIGHTING IT. I DO NOT HAVE THE ENERGY FOR MERCY, LOKI.
SO I ASK YOU... AS YOUR ENEMY, AS YOUR BROTHER, AS YOUR KING...
...DO YOU TRUST YOURSELF?
IS THIS A WISE COURSE?
There was uru in Thor's gaze.
But this was no messy trickster. No ranting villain. No Loki Thor had fought before.
WE'LL FIND OUT.
Thor now faced Loki in their aspect as Teller of the Tales...

...and in every tale, there must be an ending.

THE WISDOM OF THE FOOL

> “A FOOLISH MAN THINKS HE KNOWS EVERYTHING IF PLACED IN UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTY; BUT HE KNOWS NOT WHAT TO ANSWER, IF TO THE TEST HE IS PUT.”
>
> – THE ELDER EDDAS OF SAEMUND SIGFUSSON

Thor slept the sleep of the dead.
For this was the **All-Sleep**, price of the **All-Power**--the **mortal** sleep, the sleep of many days in which even an **All-Father** can be killed by a well-struck blow.
And in that sleep, Thor **dreamed**...
...of **falling**.
And all the way down, he heard the mocking laugh of the **Trickster**, the **Talesmith**, foe once and foe **again**...
An endless fall through endless **darkness**, until the exhaustion he had fought so long **overtook** him--and he was taken by a deeper darkness yet.
LOKI!
Thor woke--

--in the wilderness.
ODIN'S BEARD...
NO TRUER WORDS SPOKEN, THUNDER GOD--FOR YOUR FATHER'S BEARD IS INDEED UPON YOUR OWN FACE.
HOW LONG DID I SLEEP...?
AND WHERE DID LOKI'S MAGIC TAKE ME?
A GARDEN OF EXQUISITE BEAUTY, 'NEATH A SKY OF VELVET AND RUBIES. A SHAME I CANNOT STAY TO REST LONGER IN SUCH A PARADISE.
BUT I FEEL MY FULL STRENGTH RETURNED...
...AND I HAVE TARRIED TOO LONG ALREADY.
IF TORANOS DID NOT FIND AND KILL ME IN MY SLUMBER, WHAT EVIL HATH HE WROUGHT ELSEWHERE?
COME, MJOLNIR! SPIN ME A DOORWAY TO FAR ASGARD, THAT I MIGHT--
AND WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

LOKI.
I WARN YOU--I HAVE NEITHER TIME NOR PATIENCE FOR THIS GAME--
THIS IS NO GAME, THOR. BUT IT DOES HAVE RULES--AND EVEN MJOLNIR CANNOT BREAK THEM.
MY MAGIC HAS BOUND YOU IN THIS PLACE--TO THE RUNE RAIDHO.
RUNE OF JOURNEYS--BUT THE RUNE IS REVERSED, ITS MEANING CHANGED.
AN UNWANTED JOURNEY. PLANS DISRUPTED. THE RUNE OF CRISIS.
LOKI SPEAKS TRUE. THE HAMMER SPINS--BUT THE DIMENSIONAL WINDS DO NOT FORM.
THE RUNE-MAGIC BLOCKS ALL OTHERS--EVEN THE ALL-POWER, I SUSPECT. AND TO MAKE THAT ATTEMPT WOULD LEAVE ME VULNERABLE AGAIN...
AN EXCELLENT RIDDLE, SKALD OF REALMS. BUT YOU HAVE CHOSEN AN ILL HOUR TO AGAIN PLAY THE TRICKSTER'S ROLE--
--SO RATHER THAN PLAY ALONG, I SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE!
HA! AS YOU WISH, BROTHER.
BUT IF YOU'RE TRYING THAT ROUTE... I'D PACK A LUNCH.

LOKI AGAIN SPEAKS TRUE--MUSPELHEIM TAKE THEM!
I HAVE NO GOATS--NO CHARIOT. EVEN AT FULL SPEED, IT COULD TAKE MILLENNIA TO REACH EARTH OR ASGARD FROM WHEREVER I AM--
--AND THESE ARE STARS I HAVE NE'ER BEHELD IN MY LONG LIFE. AM I EVEN IN MY OWN REALITY?
PERHAPS TORANOS CANNOT FIND ME HERE.
WHERE IS HE NOW, WITH NO THUNDER GOD TO BATTLE? WHAT IS HE DOING TO MY ALLIES WHILE I DAWDLE HERE...?
LOKI--AS YOUR KING, I DEMAND--
AND AS YOUR FOOL, I DENY. SOLVE THE RIDDLE, THOR--OR YOU'LL DIE HERE.
STILL, IF IT'LL HELP YOU USE WHAT YOU KEEP IN THAT HELMET OF YOURS...
...I'LL TURN A FEW STONES INTO THAT LUNCH I MENTIONED.
AFTER ALL, A GOOD JAILER SHOULD KEEP THEIR PRISONER FED...
LOKI...

...I AM NO ONE'S PRISONER!
KRAKADOOM
HAVE IT YOUR WAY, THOR.
YOU WON'T BREAK BREAD? THEN YOU CAN STEW. I'VE FURNISHED YOU WITH EVERY CLUE.
SO NOW, I TAKE MY LEAVE OF YOU...WITH THE FLIP OF A RUNE...
...AND A "TOODLE-OO."
And as the rune-staff struck the ground...
...Thor was left alone.

Alone with his rage.
LOKI! GET BACK HERE!
LOKI!
For in the eye of his mind, Thor saw only the havoc Toranos was causing in fruitless search of him.
HHRRAAAARGH--
Who was being swept away by the storms of Toranos now? Midgard's mortals? Thor's own people? Some innocent alien world?
There was no knowing--thus, each new possibility was more brutal than the last. And Thor could do nothing...
...save vent his fury.
For an unknown time, the force of Thor's wrath buffeted against the land below...

...until there was no more left in him.
WELL DONE, THOR. WELL DONE, THOU HERO OF GODS AND MORTALS.
THOU HAST FOUGHT A MOST COURAGEOUS BATTLE INDEED...
...AGAINST A GARDEN OF FLOWERS.
INDEED, THY RAGE HAS SCOURED IT DOWN TO BEDROCK... OR BED-CRYSTAL, AS IT MAY BE.
TELL ME, HAS IT BROUGHT YOU CLOSER TO ESCAPE?
NO, THOR.
NO, IT HAS NOT.
IN TIMES PAST, THIS IS WHEN MJOLNIR WOULD GROW HEAVY IN MY GRIP--OR FATHER ODIN'S VOICE WOULD SCOLD ME FROM THE URU.
NOW I AM LEFT TO SCOLD MYSELF. TO WEIGH MYSELF ON THE SCALES OF THE ALL-FATHER'S JUSTICE...AND DECIDE MY PUNISHMENT.
A LITTLE HARD LABOR WILL BE GOOD FOR THE SOUL, I THINK.
TO WORK, THEN, GOD OF THE HAMMER...

"...TO WORK."
And to work the Thunder God went.
"USE WHAT YOU KEEP IN THAT HELMET," LOKI SAID. WHAT DO I KEEP IN THIS?
GOOD ASGARDIAN STEEL...
SHRAKK
...THAT MAY BE SHAPED.
First came lightning, to heat the metal.
Then the mighty hammer, the Crusher of legend, that Thor could wield more expertly than any smith who lived...
And so it went, o'er and again--until the time came for quenching rain to cool the metal...
...and for Mjolnir to become a whetstone, to hone what he had forged until 'twas sharp as thought--and sharper.
And when the great ax-head was done, Thor gave it a name.
TORMOD SHALL I CALL THEE.
FOR TO SOLVE LOKI'S RIDDLE, MY MIND MUST BE AS KEEN AS THOU ART...

"...AND WE SHALL TEST THE EDGE OF BOTH."
SHARP ENOUGH TO SHAVE A GOD'S BRISTLES--A GOOD TEST OF ANY BLADE.
AND IF WORSE COMES TO WORST, I SHALL KNOW HOW LONG I HAVE BEEN HERE BY HOW LONG IT TAKES TO GROW BACK--
THOR!
DON'T DO IT!
WHAT--?
OH--I BEG FORGIVENESS, BROTHER! FINDING YOU WITH A BLADE AT YOUR OWN THROAT, I FEARED THE WORST.
ALTHOUGH... MAYBE NOT THE WORST, COMPARED TO THE FATE THAT AWAITS IF YOU FAIL TO--
LOKI.
STAND THERE A MOMENT.

LIKE *THIS?*
TAKING MY *HEAD* OFF WOULD BE *TOO EASY,* THOR. YOU CAN'T JUST HACK YOUR WAY THROUGH *THIS* GORDIAN KNOT.
BUT IF YOU WANT SOME *LATERAL THINKING*...YOU HAVE A *"GET OUT OF JAIL FREE"* CARD IN YOUR OWN HAND.
ARE YOU NOT *KING OF ASGARD?* HERO OF A THOUSAND *BATTLES?* WHO DESERVES VALHALLA IF NOT *YOU?*
AND ONCE THERE, WHO COULD STOP YOU WALKING *OUT* AGAIN?
DO IT, THOR. *CUT THE THREAD OF FATE...* AND *FALL.*
THE *VALKYRIES* WILL MOST SURELY *CATCH* YOU.

THE WAYS OF DEATH CANNOT BE GAMED, LOKI--AS YOU WELL KNOW. THERE ARE FORCES TO WHICH EVEN A GOD MUST BOW.
YOU ARE CORRECT, HOWEVER--I DO HAVE THE SOLUTION RIGHT HERE...
KARAKK
THAPP
...IN MINE OWN HAND.
THE RUNE RAIDHO IS BROKEN. NOW WE ARE BOTH PRISONERS, RIDDLE-SMITH.
MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION? VERY LATERAL!
A WELL-SEVERED KNOT INDEED--AND A FINE TRICK.
BUT DESTRUCTION IS ONLY ONE SIDE OF THIS COIN...
...AND NO TRICK OF YOURS WILL SAVE YOU.

THE TOOLS ARE IN THINE HANDS, BROTHER!
And with that, Loki spun the rune-staff again...
...struck the ground...
...and was gone.
Leaving the Thunder God alone with the riddle.
BEFORE THIS BEGAN, I SWORE TO TRUST LOKI--EVEN AS MY ENEMY.
AND THOUGH THE TRICKSTER SHOWS IN MANNER ALL THE MALEVOLENCE OF OLD...EACH TAUNT IS A CLUE.
THE GAME IS FAIR--AND RAIDHO IS THE KEY TO IT.
A RUNE OF MY OWN NAME. LITTLE WONDER IT HAS THE POWER TO CAGE ME THUS.
AND A RUNE OF THE TALES--NOT THE STORY TOLD, BUT THE STORY LIVED. THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS. THE WORK OF DAY TO DAY.
RNNCH
I SUSPECTED THE ANSWER TO THIS CONUNDRUM WHEN MY RAGE COOLED--'TIS TIME TO SEE IF I AM RIGHT.
THE TOOLS ARE IN MY HANDS...

"...I MUST ONLY PUT THEM TOGETHER."
Beyond the reach of Thor's wrath, the wilderness still bloomed.
A branch made a stout handle, river reeds made strong bindings...
...and Tormod was fully born in Mighty Thor's hand-- Tormod the keen edge, Tormod Riddle-Solver. Tormod, the first of three.
(Would you know more? More will be told.)
Then Thor selected a tree-- a young oak out of place in such a strange forest.
And after felling it with a single blow--
--(upon which Tormod returned as Mjolnir would have, for 'twas the All-King's creation and bore his magic)--
--Thor settled down to the true task.
A GORDIAN KNOT. A SEEMINGLY COMPLEX PROBLEM WITH A SIMPLE ANSWER.
LOKI ARRIVES BEHIND MY BACK-- BUT MAKES A POINT OF LEAVING IN FRONT OF MY FACE.
ALWAYS SHOWING ME THEIR STAFF-- THE MEANS OF TRAVEL.
NO TRICK OF MINE WILL SAVE ME, I AM TOLD...
...WHICH LEAVES A TRICK OF THE TRICKSTER'S OWN-- A RUNE-STAFF TO MATCH THEIRS.
A SIMPLE ANSWER. AND YET...
...IS IT THAT SIMPLE? I SIMPLY BANG MY CANE ON THE GROUND LIKE DONALD BLAKE AND THE GAME IS OVER?
OR AM I SIMPLY PLAYING A FOOL'S FOOL... BY PUTTING MY TRUST IN--
THOR!

YOU THOUGHT **WHITTLING A STICK** WOULD SOLVE MY RIDDLE? **FOOL THAT YOU ARE!** YOU HAVE **FAILED**, THUNDERER-- AND NOW **YOU MUST DIE!**
AND YET, MAGNANIMOUS AS I AM, I OFFER YOU **ONE LAST CHANCE** TO SURVIVE MY WRATH!
BESTOW UNTO ME **THE THRONE OF ASGARD!** GIVE TO ME THE ROLE OF **ALL-FATHER!** SWEAR TO **SERVE** ME, **ALL THE DAYS OF THINE IMMORTAL LIFE--**
--AND **LOKI**, THE **FIENDISH GOD OF EVIL**, WILL **LET YOU LIVE!**

...
REALLY?
I WAS *QUESTIONING* MYSELF, LOKI. BUT EVEN AS MY *ENEMY*, YOU CLEARLY WANT ME TO *SUCCEED*.
FOR, THOUGH I KNOW NOT THE *WHY* OF THIS ROLE YOU PLAY, NOR WHAT ILL WIND HAS BROUGHT THEE TO *ASSUME* IT...
...AFTER ALL THE ROAD YOU AND I HAVE WALKED TOGETHER, THERE IS *ONE* THING I KNOW IN MY *MARROW*.
ANY LOKI WHO SAYS THEY WANT A *THRONE*--
--IS A LIAR!
THY RIDDLE IS *SOLVED*, SKALD! THY TALE IS *OVER*!
RAIDHO-- RUNE OF JOURNEYS--
--TAKE ME HOME!

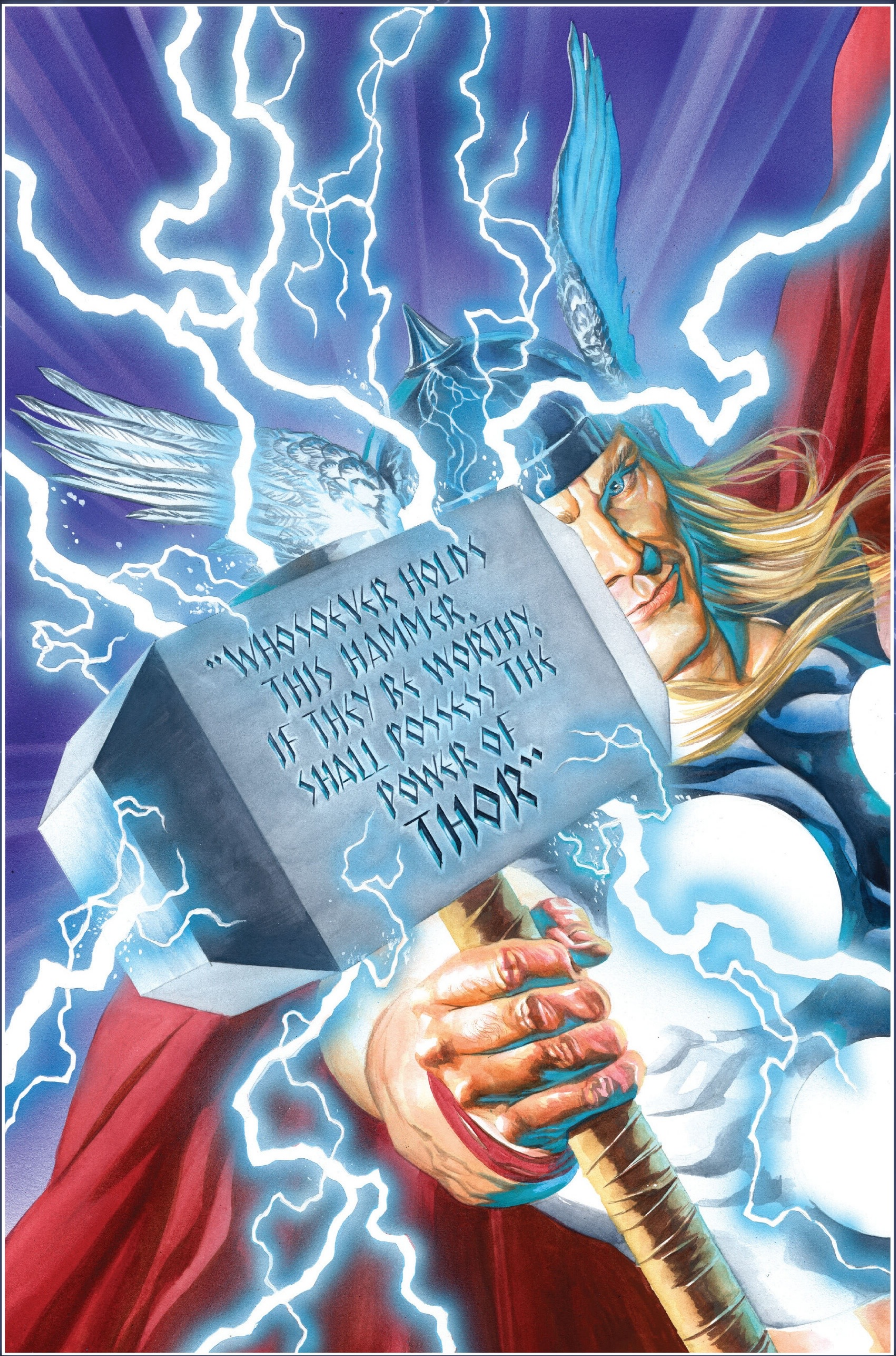
OKAY.
...
THE STARS ARE IN THE SAME PLACES I LEFT THEM.
FOR ALL THE TIME SPENT IN YOUR WILDERNESS, NO TIME HERE HAS PASSED.
YET ALL THE SAME, I SLEPT THE ALL-SLEEP... I RETURN RENEWED...
...AND THAT IS ALL THAT IS KEEPING THINE HEAD UPON THY SHOULDERS!
WHAT MEANT YOU BY THIS GAME, LOKI?
NO GAME.
YOU HAD A LESSON TO LEARN. YOU LEARNED IT.
YOU NEEDED A WEAPON FOR WHAT'S COMING. YOU HAVE IT.
YOU WERE TESTED--YOU PASSED.

AND HAD I FAILED THE TEST...?
YOU'D BE DEAD.
STARVED BONES ON AN ALIEN WORLD IN A FORGOTTEN TIME. AND THEN TORANOS WOULD WREAK HIS HAVOC OVER ALL.
UNDERSTAND THIS, THOR--IF I COME TO YOU AS YOUR ENEMY, IT IS AS THE ENEMY YOU NEED... AND I WILL NOT CODDLE YOU.
A GAME WITH STAKES IS STILL A GAME, LOKI.
BUT A LESSON HAS BEEN LEARNED--THAT THE ALL-FATHER'S POWER CANNOT GUARANTEE VICTORY...BUT MY OWN MIGHT, IF I HAVE THE QUICK MIND TO APPLY IT.
INDEED, THE SOLUTION TO THE RIDDLE OF TORANOS IS NOW WITHIN REACH.
WE WILL NEED ALLIES FOR WHAT COMES NEXT--ALLIES WHO SHARE THE NECESSARY EXPERIENCE...
...THOUGH I FEAR AT LEAST ONE WILL NOT ENJOY SEEING LOKI AT HER DOOR.
IF SHE IS TO JOIN US IN BATTLE...

"...I MUST SPEAK TO THE *GODDESS OF THUNDER* ALONE."

THE RIDDLE OF RAIDHO

4


"WHOSOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER, IF THEY BE WORTHY, SHALL POSSESS THE POWER OF THOR."

“FOR THE ELEVENTH I KNOW, IF I HAVE TO LEAD MY ANCIENT FRIENDS TO BATTLE, UNDER THEIR SHIELDS I SING, AND WITH POWER THEY GO SAFE TO THE FIGHT, SAFE FROM THE FIGHT; SAFE ON EVERY SIDE THEY GO.”

- ODIN’S RUNE-SONG, THE ELDER EDDAS OF SAEMUND SIGFUSSON.

He is coming closer.
Across the void of space, **he is coming closer.** Across the gulf of time, **he is coming closer.**
You wake. You work. You eat. You sleep. And **he is coming closer.**
The summers are hotter and the storms are stronger and the floods rise higher and **he is coming closer.**
We can't rush these things and **he is coming closer.** It's an election year and **he is coming closer.** I don't believe it anyway and **he is coming closer.**
The wheel of fate is in his hand and **he is coming closer.**
Look him in the eye.
Toranos is coming closer...

...and there are forces to which even a God must bow.
HE IS COMING CLOSER...
Yes.
He was coming closer then too.
IS IT TRUE?
BILL...?
DON'T BLAME ME. I TOLD HIM ALL ABOUT IT...
YES, LOKI TOLD ME ALL ABOUT IT. BUT LOKI TELLS STORIES.
SO I ASK YOU, MY LADY SIF-- IS IT TRUE?
I TOLD HIM! BETA RAY BILL WAS FIRST ON THE LIST THOR GAVE ME! THE TOP PICK!
DON'T TELL ME YOUR EYES DIDN'T SEE IT ALL, SISTER OF HEIMDALL...
AYE, I DO SEE MUCH, LOKI...
...EXCEPT FOR THOSE PARTICULAR THINGS YOU DON'T WANT ME TO.
WHERE EXACTLY DID THOR'S NEW AX COME FROM...?
WHY NOT ASK HIM?
MAYBE HE'LL EVEN TELL YOU.

BILL...I KNOW WE ARE NOT AS WE ONCE *WERE*.
AND THAT THE SAME CAN BE SAID FOR YOU AND *THOR*...
ONCE I CALLED HIM *BROTHER* IN MY HEART--BUT THAT BOND FEELS *FRACTURED* OF LATE AND PERHAPS CANNOT BE MENDED.
I REMAIN A *FRIEND OF ASGARD*, IN TIME OF NEED...
...BUT HAVING FOUGHT TO FIND MY *OWN* PATH--AND MY OWN *POWER*--I *WONDER*.
AM I STILL *OF* ASGARD? DID I *EVER* STAND AMONG YOU?
EVEN AFTER ALL THIS TIME, CAN I TRULY *KNOW* THE MINDS OF *GODS?*
I, WHO AM ONLY A MAN?
BILL... PLEASE KNOW THAT YOU ARE SO MUCH *MORE* THAN THAT.
THY WORDS ARE MEANT *KINDLY*, SIF--BUT THEY ARE *WORDS*, EASY SAID AND HARD ACCEPTED.
SO IF LOKI SPEAKS *TRUE*... IF THOR ASKS... *THAT* OF ME...
...I HOPE HE KNOWS WHAT IT *IS* THAT HE ASKS.
Thor knew.

He knew the weight of the service he requested better than any who lived.
All who bore a weight of that nature had, in some way, been marked by it...
...even those who had far greater loads to carry.
Ororo was her name, and Arakko was her home--the blood-red planet, once named Mars for a god of war, now itself a battleground.
She was a commander of armies--but no queen, for there were no thrones on Arakko.
OR
OR
O.
But Thor was a King...
YOU ARE SUMMONED.

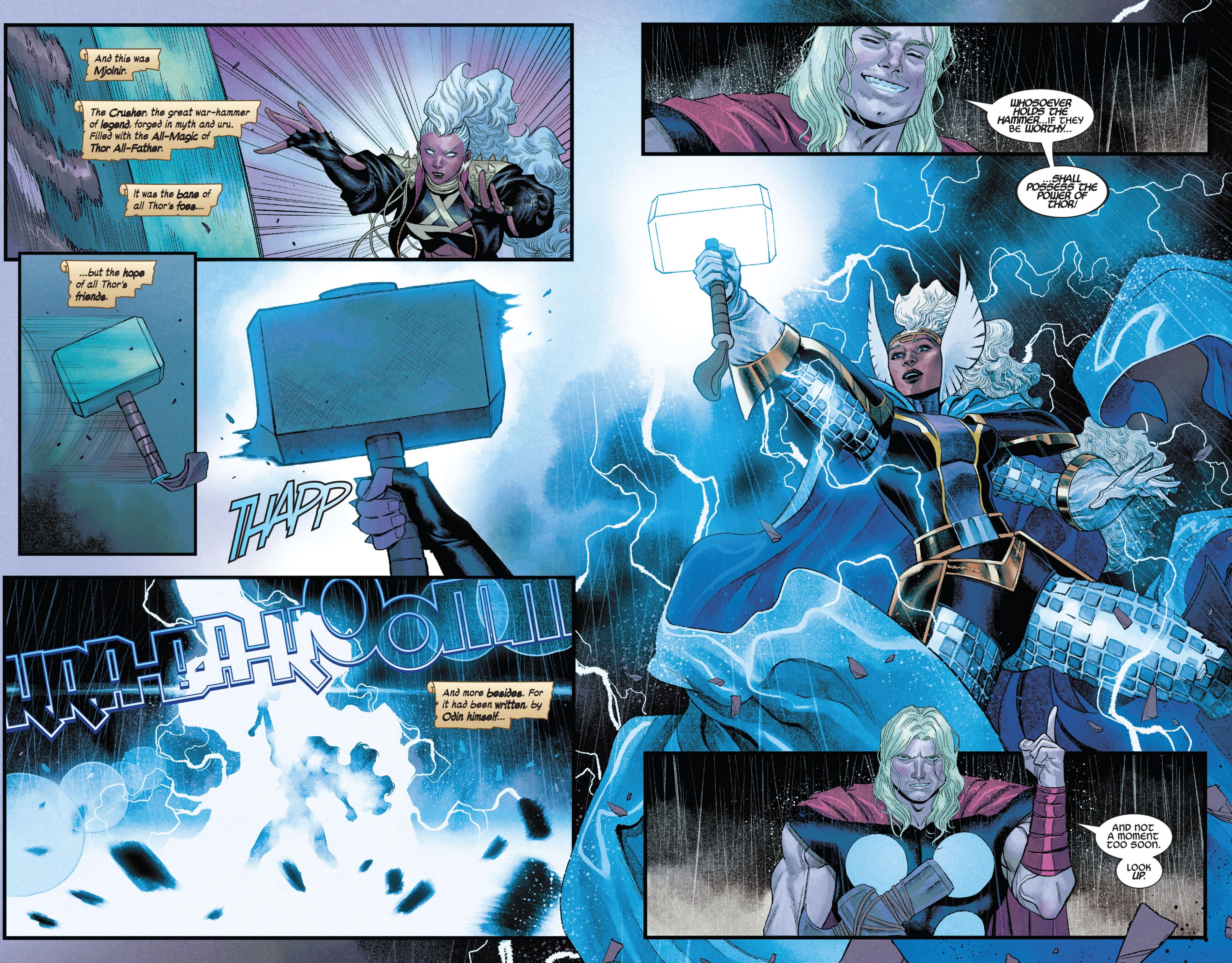
...and, perhaps, too used to storms coming at his call.
AM I?
Ororo was the Storm, and shaped it as her birthright. Her power to do so was measureless--more than any mutant with a similar gift.
WHOOSH
No normal wind could blow her where she did not wish to go...
...but this was no normal wind.
These were the dimensional winds, cast by ancient magic--and though magic was in Ororo's blood...
YOU.
ARE SUMMONED.
...it was not yet strong enough to counter them.
DAMMIT-- THOR--

Not yet.
--I'M BUSY.
THEN I APOLOGIZE FOR THE ABRUPTNESS OF THE SUMMONS, ORORO.
APOLOGY ACCEPTED--IF YOU RETURN ME TO ARAKKO.
NOW, THOR.
A MOMENT, PLEASE.
I COULD NOT TRUST EVEN MY RAVENS TO CONVEY THE SERIOUSNESS OF MY MESSAGE--
--NOR THE URGENCY OF--
SNAPP
BRA-KROOOMMMM
--my NEED FOR YOU.
OW.
Like the Blue Area upon its opposite side, the Grey Area of the Moon was home to a pocket of air.
And thus, weather.

Both the combatants were armed.
IS THE NEED SO URGENT THAT YOU MUST KIDNAP ME FROM MY HOME AND MY PEOPLE?
BECAUSE EVEN IF THAT IS THE CASE--I PROMISE YOU, ARAKKO NEEDS ME MORE.
RETURN ME.
ORORO--
KRAKOOOM
...
STOP HITTING ME, PLEASE.
EXCUSE ME?
I SPOKE NOT TO YOU, ORORO...
BRATHOOOM
...BUT TO THE LIGHTNING.
THANK YOU, MY FRIEND.

I AM GROWING *TIRED* OF PEOPLE FORCING ME TO *MISS MY STRIKES*...
THE LIGHTNING LOVES *ME* AS IT LOVES *YOU*. WE SHOULD NOT MAKE IT *CHOOSE*.
IT CANNOT TRULY *HURT* ME, IN ANY CASE--
I TRUST IT TO CONVEY THE *SERIOUSNESS* OF MY *MESSAGE*.
AND THOUGH I *ENJOY* THE PLAY OF THE LIGHTNING... THERE ARE MORE *UNIVERSAL* FORCES.
ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE, FOR EXAMPLE.
UNNHH...
AND THERE ARE PLACES WHERE THE ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE...IS *HIGH*.
SUCH AS *JUPITER*.
YOU COMMAND THE *STORM*, THOR. I COMMAND *WEATHER*-- AND NOT AS *A KING ON A THRONE*.
I COMMAND IT AS AN *EQUAL*.
Ororo spoke true. In that moment, in that small space, Thor felt all the crushing weight of a far-off world upon his back.
His sinews **screamed**. His spine bid fair to **break**. And all the God of Thunder could **do**...

...was smile.
WHO'S STRONGER...?
WHAT?
THE QUESTION--NNHH--THOSE LIKE US ARE ALWAYS ASKED. WHO'S STRONGER?
CAN I ARM-WRESTLE THE HULK? RUN A RACE WITH QUICKSILVER? CHALLENGE WILLIE LUMPKIN IN A CONTEST OF WIGGLING EARS?
QUICKLY--RRH--MEASURE THE RESULTS! WRITE THEM DOWN, TO SEE WHO IS WORTHY!
BUT STRENGTH IS RELATIVE TO THE NEED FOR IT.
IF I HAVE TO... I CAN STAND ON JUPITER. I CAN STAND ANYTHING IF THE NEED IS GREAT AND THE CAUSE IS JUST--AS CAN YOU. AS CAN WE ALL.
WE ARE NOT MEASURED BY STRENGTH, NOR BY RAW POWER. THE MEASURE OF US IS WHAT WE DO...WHEN THE NEED FOR ACTION LIES WITH US...
...AND THE HAMMER IS IN OUR HAND.
And against the crushing air of another world...
...Thor threw with all his force.


And this was Mjolnir.
The Crusher, the great war-hammer of legend, forged in myth and uru. Filled with the All-Magic of Thor All-Father.
It was the bane of all Thor's foes...
...but the hope of all Thor's friends.
THAPP
KRA-BATHOOOM
And more besides. For it had been written, by Odin himself...
WHOSOEVER HOLDS THE HAMMER...IF THEY BE WORTHY...
...SHALL POSSESS THE POWER OF THOR!
AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.
LOOK UP.

Look up.
Look at the world outside your window. Look at the raging *fires*, the screaming *winds*, the rising *waters*.
Look at the ticking of the clock. See how the hour grows *late*--and see whose hour has *arrived*.
He is no longer coming closer.
He is here.
AT LAST I HAVE FOUND YOU!
TORANOS IS **HERE**, SMALL GODS-- **TORANOS, FIRST OF ALL THUNDERERS!** PROOF AGAINST **ALL YOUR POWER!**
I WAS FORMED WITH THE **GODS** AT THE **FORMING OF THE EARTH**--AND I WILL BRING **ALL THESE THINGS** TO THEIR **END!**
YOU SUMMONED ME TO FIGHT **THAT?**
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT **WAS** URGENT.
AYE. ONCE TORANOS DESTROYS **ME**, HE HAS PROMISED DOOM TO **MIDGARD**-- AND I SUSPECT **PLANET ARAKKO** WILL NOT EVADE HIS WRATH FOR **LONG**.
AND WHAT HE CLAIMS IS **TRUE**. HE IS THE **ELDER GOD OF THUNDER**, AND EVEN THE **ODIN-POWER** CANNOT FULLY DEFEAT HIM...
...BUT I HAVE MY **OWN** POWER, ORORO.
AND I HAVE A **PLAN**.
WILL YOU TRUST ME?

TRUST THE **WHEEL OF FATE**, GODLINGS--TO ***TURN*** AND TURN ***AGAIN***--
--AND BRING AROUND YOUR DOOM!
KROOMM
HONESTLY? IT DEPENDS ON THE ***PLAN***.
I HAVE MY OWN POWER TOO, THOR--AND I'VE REJECTED ***YOURS*** BEFORE.
I THINK WE'VE ESTABLISHED THAT I DON'T NEED A ***HAMMER*** TO CALL DOWN ***THUNDER***...
VERY TRUE!
ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU CAN BENCH-PRESS AN ***EIGHTEEN-WHEELER*** NOW. THAT'LL BE FUN AT PARTIES.
AND SORRY ABOUT THE WHOLE "GIVING YOU THE POWER OF THOR FOR A SCHEME" THING WAY BACK WHEN--THAT WAS A ***DIFFERENT LOKI***, KINDA SORTA MAYBE.
PLEASE DON'T THROW THE HAMMER AT ME.

OROR0?
THROW THE HAMMER AT LOKI.
NOW I TRUST YOUR PLAN.
EEP!
I'M NOT CATCHING THAT FASTBALL SPECIAL.
THAT'S A HERO'S TASK IF I EVER SAW ONE...AND FORTUNATELY--
--I HAVE ONE RIGHT HERE!
BETA RAY BILL--COME FORTH!
THAPP
KRAKOOOM
FOR MJOLNIR IS YOURS AGAIN--

--TO HOLD HIGH--
--AS A WARRIOR OF ASGARD!
I...HAD FORGOTTEN WHAT THIS WAS. TO HOLD THE HAMMER...
...IT FEELS AS IF ASGARD-- THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE--IS HOLDING ME.
AT HER VERY HEART.
THAT YOU EVER DOUBTED THAT IS A SHAME UPON ME, BILL. BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME.
FOR TORANOS CALLS BACK HIS WHEEL--AND WE ARE NOT YET AT FULL STRENGTH.
I SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING. WITHOUT THE HAMMER, HOW LONG DOES THE POWER OF THOR LAST...?
FOR THOSE NOT THOR--SIXTY SECONDS. AND EACH SECOND COUNTS!
LOKI--

--YOUR TURN!
TWO CAN HOLD THE HAMMER AS EASILY AS ONE...
...AND FOUR AS EASILY AS TWO!
AAH! THE THORS THAT REFRESHES!
BUT THE NUMBER OF MAGIC IS FIVE. TO MY EYE, THERE'S A THOR MISSING.
WHO'S IT GONNA BE, AS IF I DIDN'T KNOW...?
IT WILL BE I! I, TORANOS!
I WILL HURL THINE OWN MALLET THROUGH THY FRAGILE SKULL--
And this was Toranos' error.
TORANOS--
For the magic of Mjolnir was not his magic to command.
--I SAY THEE NAY.
AND I SAY THEE NEIGH.
LITTLE 'ORSE 'UMOR THERE.
WELL MET, JANE FOSTER.
BEHOLD, TORANOS--YOU COULD NOT DEFEAT THOR WHEN HE STOOD ALONE. AND NOW?
It belonged to the All-Father--and unlike his father, Odin...

...All-Father Thor was always happy to **share.**
NOW YOU FACE THE THOR CORPS.
'Twas a majestic sight, even for Toranos' eyes.
But the wheel still **turned...**

...and fate was coming closer.
I DON'T SHARE.
YOU'RE MY HEAD OF ACQUISITIONS, SIMON. MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND THAT FACT.
SPEAKER
THE UNDEROOS ARE MINE. THE LUNCHBOXES ARE MINE. THE CAKE TOPPERS ARE MINE.
THE MOVIES ARE MINE. THE LIVE-ACTION BIOPICS, THE ANIMATED ADAPTATIONS--EVEN THE VIDEO GAMES. ALL OF THAT IS MINE.
AND MOST OF ALL? THE STORIES ARE MINE.
INTRODUCING... THE MIGHTY THOR!
HERO OF ALL TIME!!
CLOSE TO A CENTURY OF ILLUSTRATED JOURNALISM--THE TRUE STORIES OF THE MARVELS OF THE AGE IN COMIC-BOOK FORM.
"BECAUSE PLAIN TEXT CAN'T TELL THE FULL STORY"--THAT WAS THE LINE BACK IN THE FORTIES, I HEAR.
AND NOW I WILL TELL THE FULL STORY. I WILL CREATE THE TRUE STORY.
IN THIS TIME, IN THIS PLACE, IN THIS REALM...
...I WILL BE THE SKALD.
YOU UNDERSTAND? GOOD. MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND. AND THEN, IN THE NAME OF ROXXON, WHO IS THY FIRST, LAST AND ONLY GOD...

...MAKE MINE MARVEL.
URNEY
TO
MYSTERY
THE MOS EXCITIN SUPER HERO OF ALL TIME!!
ODUCING... MIGHTY THOR!
NOW
UNTAMABLE

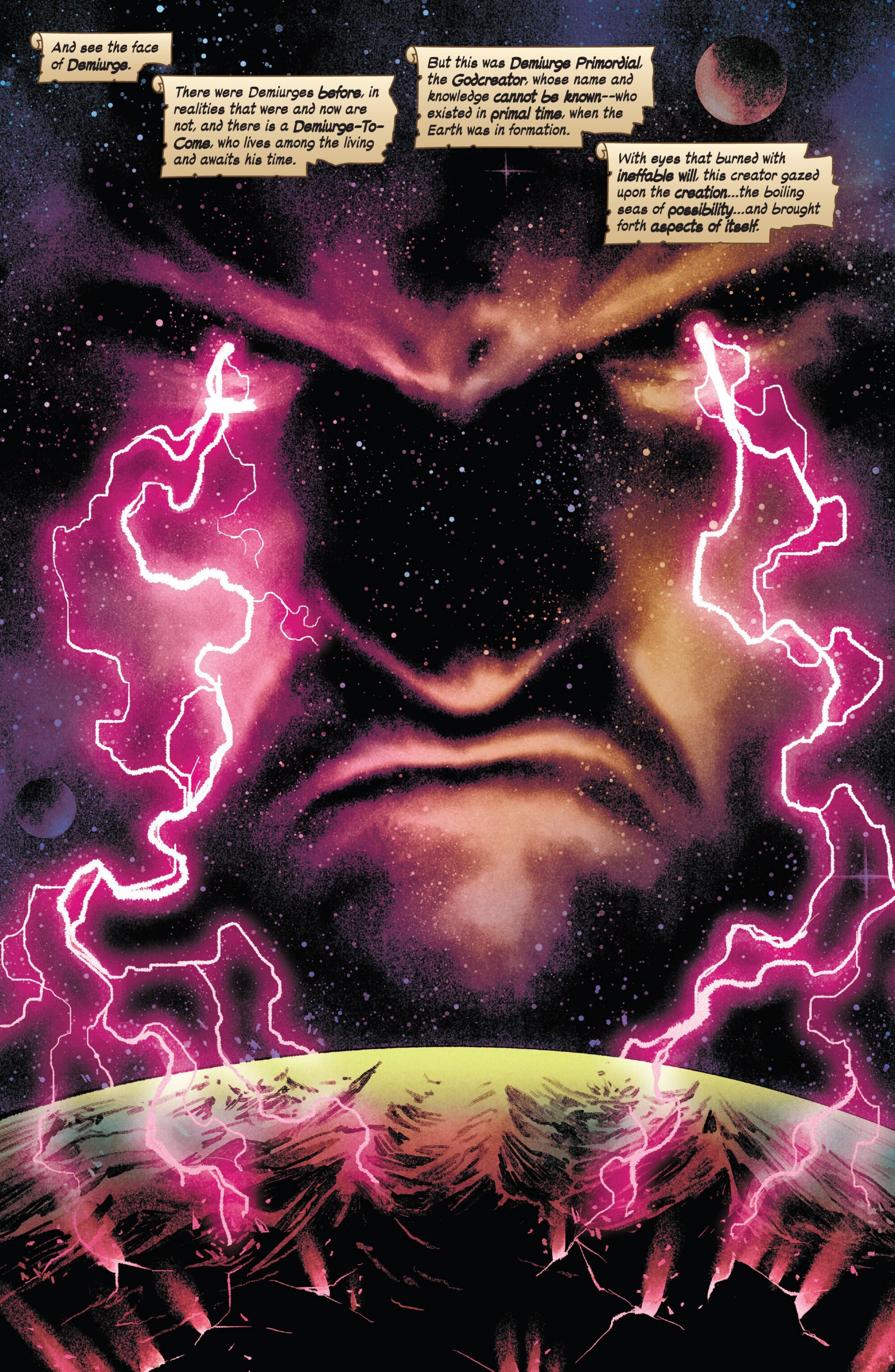
TO POSSESS THE POWER OF THOR

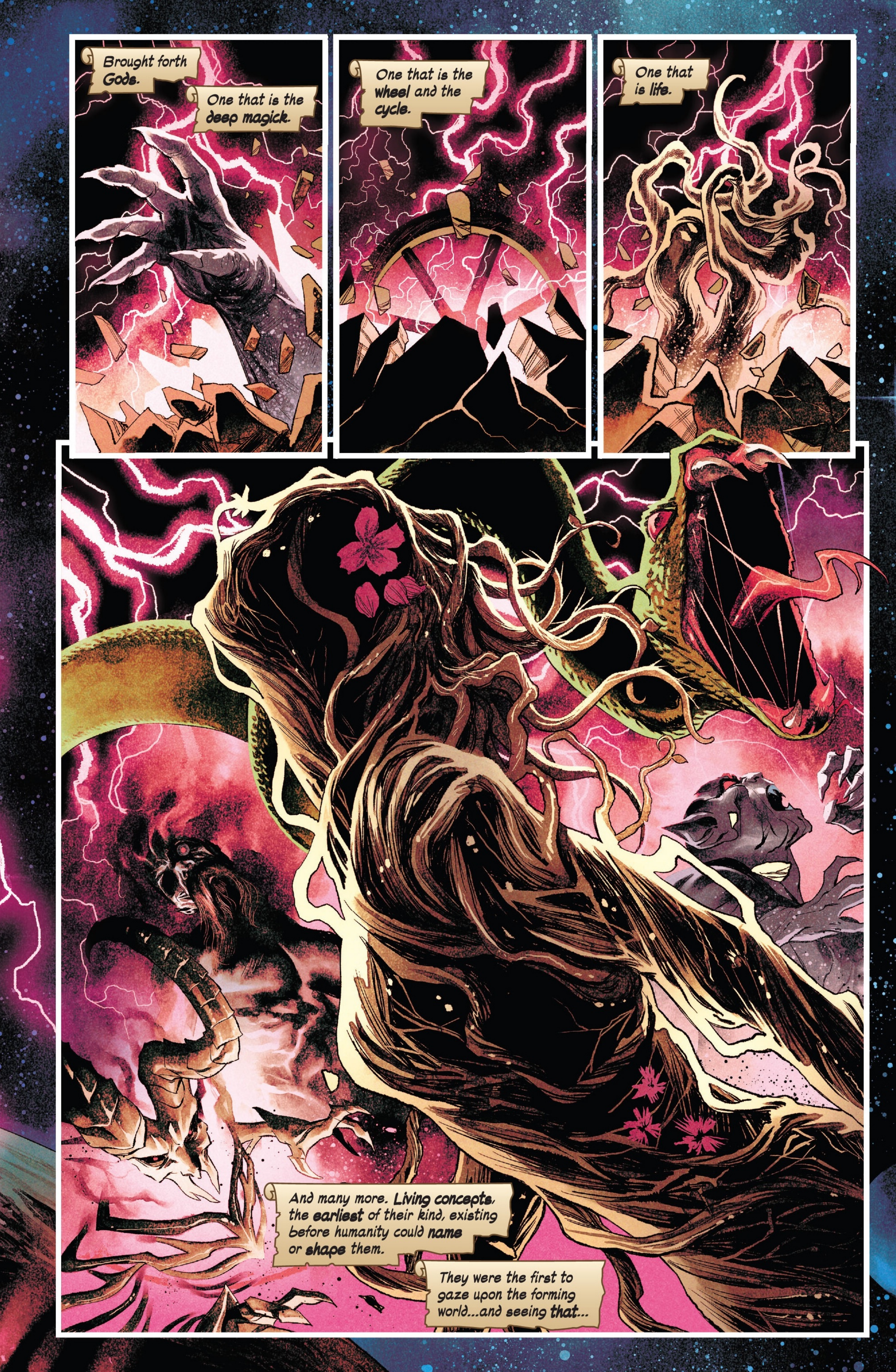
5

“FORTUNE ROTA VOLVITUR;
DESCENDO MINORATUS;
ALTER IN ALTUM TOLLITUR;
NIMIS EXALTATUS
REX SEDET IN VERTICE
CAVEAT RUINAM!”

- FROM THE *CARMINA BURANA*, AUTHOR UNKNOWN

On the dark side of the moon, there was light.
An Elder God had pitted his wrath against Gaea's child--and those who stood with him.
A god with the wheel of fate in his hand.
And the wheel had turned.
The wheel is turning.
The wheel readies to turn.
Understand ye yet, or what?
All weather turns to storm, and all this has happened before--and happens now again.
Turn the hands of the clock. Turn the wheel. Turn the page.
Turn.
Turn.


And see the face of Demiurge.
There were Demiurges before, in realities that were and now are not, and there is a Demiurge-To-Come, who lives among the living and awaits his time.
But this was Demiurge Primordial, the Godcreator, whose name and knowledge cannot be known--who existed in primal time, when the Earth was in formation.
With eyes that burned with ineffable will, this creator gazed upon the creation...the boiling seas of possibility...and brought forth aspects of itself.


Brought forth Gods.
One that is the deep magick.
One that is the wheel and the cycle.
One that is life.
And many more. Living concepts, the earliest of their kind, existing before humanity could name or shape them.
They were the first to gaze upon the forming world...and seeing that...

...they also saw each other.
And knew each other.
As the first gods, the first siblings...
...the first foes.
How could any trick-maker exist alongside the iron fate? One must be ruled by the other.
And so, the battle began...
...and then the war.
All against all, as the Demiurge's cold gaze watched and waited. For thousands of years, the Elder Gods fought to defeat and consume one another.
Back and forth, forward and back--creating and following patterns etched in their natures. Endlessly repeating cycles, always returning to their beginnings.
Only she who was life, whose name became Gaea, saw past such instant gratifications...
...to the stagnation they produced.
The Earth would not survive this. Life would not survive this.
Unless she taught a new cycle.
A wheel that turned... yet, with each turning, made new.
She began to plan.

But beware of what you plan for.
Though he knew it not, not yet--her own son now beheld the fruits of her labor.
For Toranos, who was also the thunder, had been loosed upon him and Midgard. And Thor had gathered his own forces--in his own name--to respond.
Somewhere, Gaea felt her wheel turning...
...the winter to the spring...
WHO'S NEXT FOR MJOLNIR?
LOKI--GO LONG!
THAP
GOOD GUESS--
--BUT WRONG. WE ONLY GET SIXTY SECONDS OF THOR-TIME WITHOUT TOUCHING THE HAMMER--
--AND STORM HAD IT FIRST!
...the spring to the summer...
THAP
LET'S PASS IT TO SOMEONE WHO WANTS IT!
BETA RAY BILL--TO YOU!
...the summer to the autumn...
THAP
MUCH APPRECIATED, ORORO.
VERY MUCH.
...and on...on and on, each in turn...

...and each building on the work of the last.
MY BLOW IS STRUCK AGAINST HIM! WHO'S NEXT?
LADY JANE!
Again, the hammer passed close to Toranos' reach...
ACCURSED STINGING GNATS--
...again, he was denied.
WANT A TURN, MR. HORSE?
THAP
NOT FOR ME, TA. FOUR GOOD 'OOVES-- THEM'S 'AMMER ENOUGH.
--DEATH WILL CLAIM ALL OF YOU!
DEATH UPON THE WHEEL!
I DON'T THINK SO.
YOUR WHEEL'S ABOUT TO GET A PUNCTURE.

WHHROOM!!!
THE WHEEL-- CRACKS--?
'Twas an ill omen for Mighty Toranos.
'TIS THE POWER OF MJOLNIR, OLD ONE! THE CRUSHER, GREATEST OF ALL HAMMERS!
THE URU IS STRONGER THAN E'ER BEFORE--AND EAGER TO REND THE SKULL OF A TITAN!
True words--yet Thor was omitting a final truth.
Toranos had yet to taste the hammer's greatest power.
MJOLNIR...
But he could feel it, tantalizingly close...

...and his desire grew.
THAT'S THE NAME-- DON'T WEAR IT OUT.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE HELD MJOLNIR ON A FULLY LEGITIMATE BASIS--I REALLY HAVE MISSED IT.
THAP
MAGIC, MISCHIEF, TRICKERY, STORYTELLING...DON'T GET ME WRONG, THEY'RE ALL FUN.
BUT THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID...
LOKI, WAIT--
...FOR JUST HURLING A BIG HAMMER AT A THUNDER GOD'S FACE!
--NO!
Too late.
THAPP

AYE, WELL.
THAT'S TORN IT.
THE HAMMER IS MINE!
TIME RUNS, MITES OF THUNDER! IN MOMENTS, YOU WILL LOSE THE POWER OF THE STORM--AND BE HELPLESS AGAINST ME!
HE'S RIGHT. THE SIXTY SECONDS ARE UP--I CAN FEEL THE ASGARDIAN STRENGTH LEAVING ME.
I STILL HAVE POWER OVER THE WEATHER...BUT IF IT'S JUST MYSELF AND THOR AGAINST HIM...
I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
HOW CAN OUR FOE EVEN LIFT THE ENCHANTED HAMMER...?
THE REASONS ARE SIMPLE INDEED, BILL.
TORANOS?
I JUDGE YOU WORTHY OF THE POWER OF THOR.

And so it was.
THE ANCIENT STORM MEETS WITH THE NEW! THE PAST AND THE FUTURE ARE ONE IN ME!
NOTHING IS BEYOND ME NOW!
I SHALL REND YOU ALL TO DUST AND BONES--CRACK THE EARTH AND DRINK OF THE MAGMA!
ALL WILL END IN A SEA OF FIRE AND BLOOD!
THOR...
JUST GIVE HIM A SECOND.
BEFORE YOU EMBARK ON THAT NOBLE GOAL, GREAT TORANOS...I HAVE BUT ONE SMALL QUESTION FOR THEE.
ANSWER, IF YOU CAN:
WHAT IS THE POWER OF THOR?

WHAT?
WHAT...WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME...? WHY CAN I NOT...?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
WHEN THEY CALLED TO ME IN ANCIENT TIMES--AS RAIN LASHED AND LIGHTNING STRUCK, AS THE ROOF FELL IN AND THE LONGBOAT CAPSIZED--WHAT POWER DID THEY INVOKE?
DID THEY WISH THE STORM TO RAGE ON, MORE TERRIBLE EACH MOMENT THAN THE LAST? I SAY THEE NAY.
THE POWER OF THOR...IS THE POWER TO HOLD THE STORM BACK.
AND MY GREATEST POWER--MY GREATEST STRENGTH, THAT IT TOOK ME LONGEST TO LEARN--IS KNOWLEDGE.
OF HOW TO USE MY POWER WELL.
WITH COMPASSION.
WITH RESTRAINT.
WITH NOBILITY.
WITH HARD-WON WISDOM.
AND MOST OF ALL...WITH HUMILITY.
A FINE TAUTOLOGY, IS IT NOT? THE POWER OF THOR IS THE POWER TO BE WORTHY.
IF I MAY GRANT THAT POWER--AND I SEE NO RULE AGAINST IT--THEN YOU, TORANOS, DESERVE IT MORE THAN ANY.
FOR YOURS IS SURELY THE GREATEST NEED.
NO... NO!

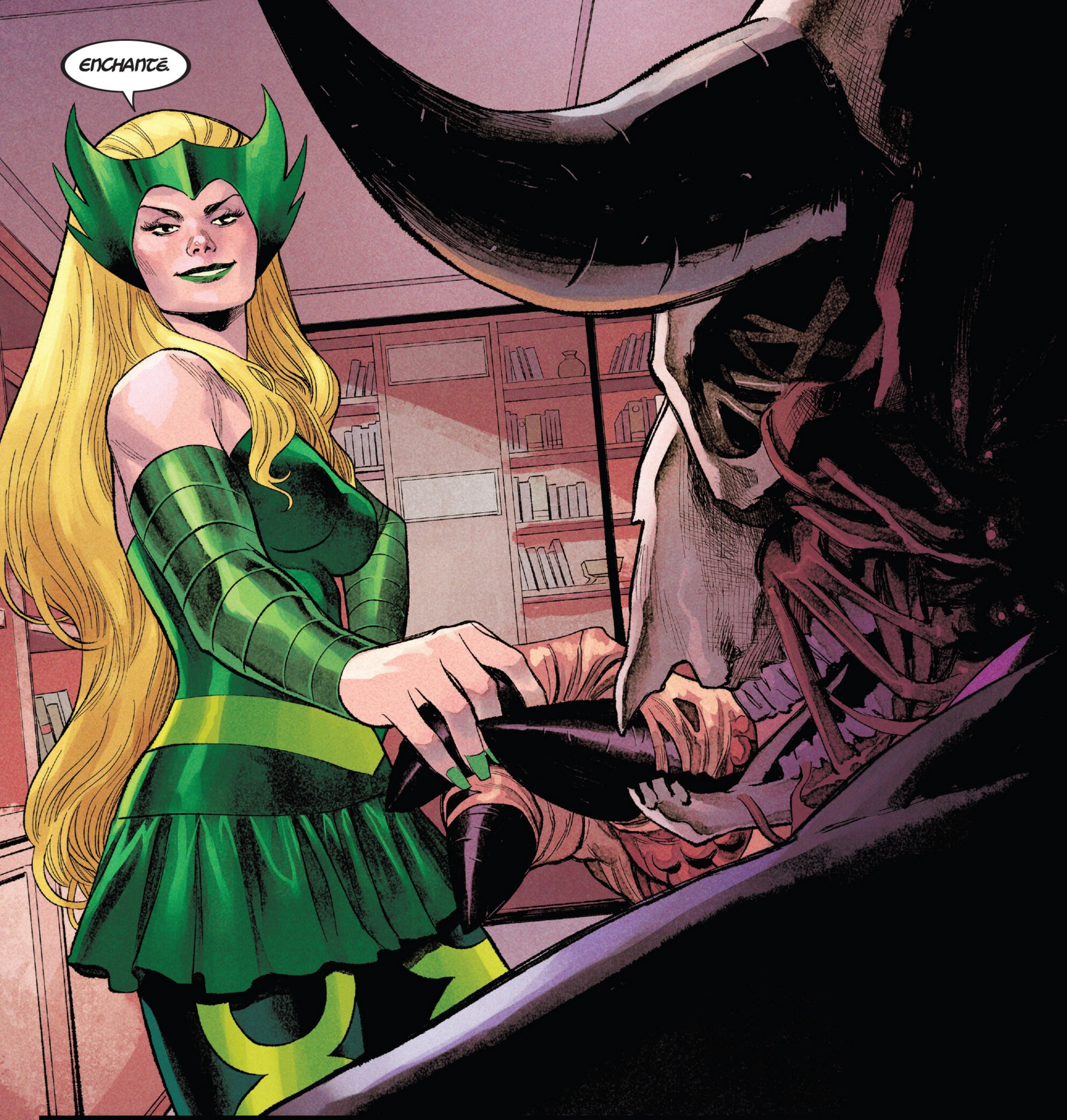
TAKE IT BACK, THOR!
TAKE THIS HORROR BACK!
THAP
WHAT IS SEEN CANNOT BE UNSEEN. THE HEART, ONCE OPENED, CANNOT SIMPLY BE CLOSED.
HOW DOES YOUR HEART FEEL, GOD OF ANCIENT THUNDERS?
IT BURNS AND SCREAMS! IT SHRIEKS! CURSE YOU, THUNDERER!
MAY YOU WEAR A CROWN OF ALL MY TORMENTS UPON THINE OWN BROW FOR THIS SOUL-TORTURE! FOR SHOWING ME WHAT--WHAT I HAVE DONE!
'TIS ONLY WHAT I WAS BID TO DO! WHAT I WAS LOOSED UPON THE EARTH TO DO!
AT THE COMMAND OF MY BROTHER--THE MAGICK-MAKER, THE UTGARD-LOKI--
--AND SHE WHO FIRST SEALED ME AWAY...
...THY MOTHER GAEA!
Somewhere, Gaea felt the winter's cold, as Thor learned the truth.
The words echoed in his ears, louder than any thunder...

...and he roared back with equal force, his rage sudden as the storm...
WHAT MEAN YOU?
TORANOS! TELL ME, DAMN YOU!
TELL ME WHAT YOU MEANT--
THOR!
...in an empty sky.
HE'S GONE.
IT WORKED.
MAKE HIM WANT THE HAMMER. GIVE HIM THE HAMMER. THEN INFECT HIM WITH THE HAMMER--AND THE AGONY OF CONSCIENCE.
AN ELEGANT TRICK...BUT DID YOU TRULY NEED ME TO PLAY IT?
I NEEDED THOSE WHO KNEW MJOLNIR BEST. THOSE STILL LIVING WHO'D WIELD THE HAMMER PERFECTLY--AND INSTINCTIVELY.
AND IF THEY WERE HEROES WHO EXEMPLIFIED WHAT MJOLNIR IS--WHAT IT IS TO BE WORTHY--SO MUCH THE BETTER.
BUT I WAYLAID THEE FROM THINE OWN WAR AND MUST MAKE AMENDS FOR THAT.
SAY THE WORD, ORORO--AND I WILL COME TO PLANET ARAKKO AND FIGHT.

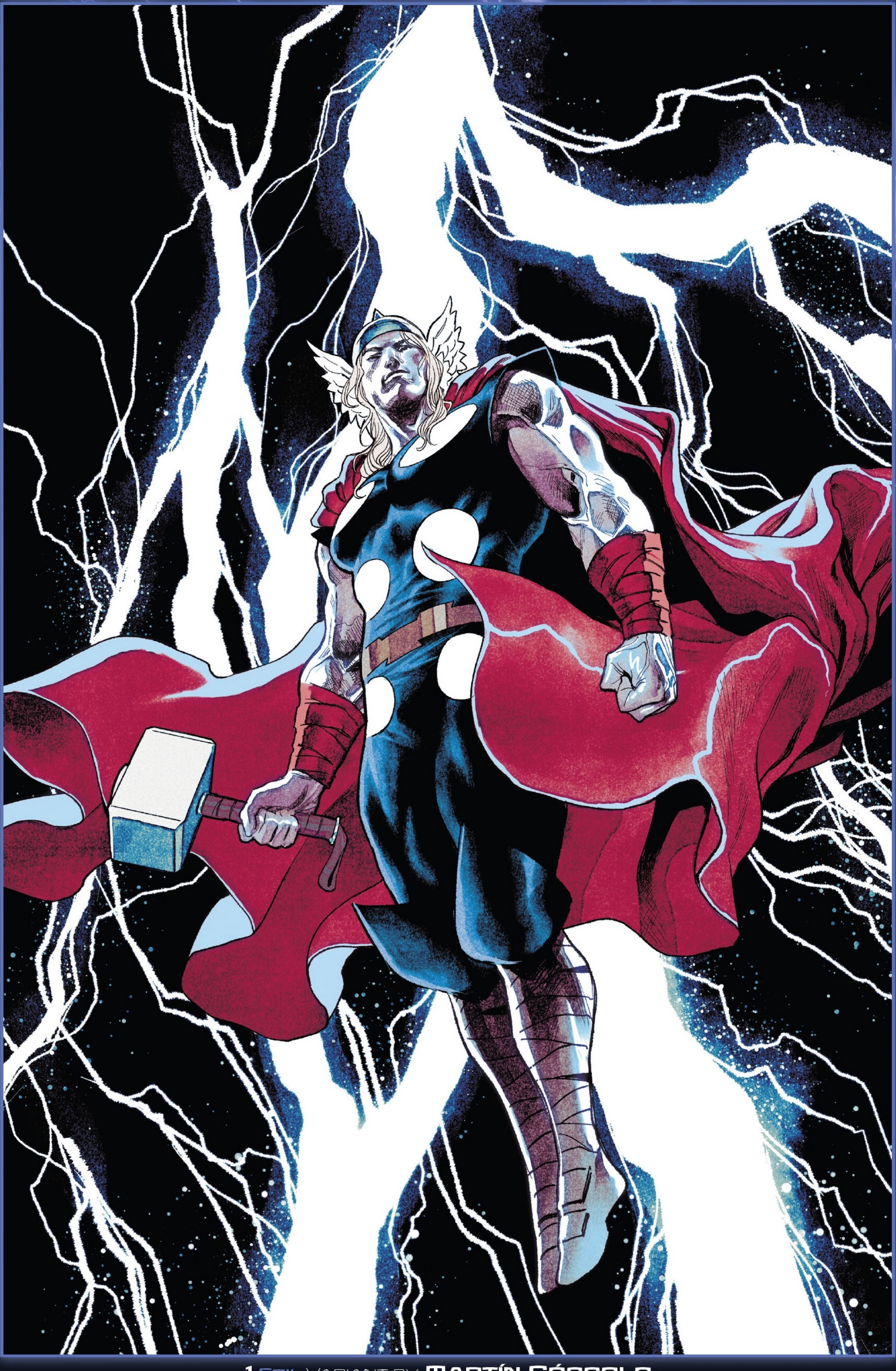
IT'D BE TAKEN AS AN INSULT BY BOTH SIDES--YOU MIGHT LOSE US THE WAR YOU WANT TO HELP WITH. BUT I'LL TAKE A RIDE HOME.
IF THOSE WINDS OF YOURS CAN SEND ME DIRECTLY TO THE VALLEY OF THE FALLEN, THIS DIVERSION WILL END UP SAVING ME A JOURNEY...
'TWILL BE DONE. BUT THERE'S NOTHING ELSE YOU WISH OF ME?
FOR NOW, JUST KEEP ORCHIS ON YOUR ENEMIES LIST. AND...MAYBE ONE MORE THING.
I'LL NEED TO MAKE A HEROIC ENTRANCE TO RALLY THE TROOPS...
"...AND I DO MISS WEARING A CAPE."
GODSPEED, ORORO.
I OWE YOU A DEBT--ONE I WILL REPAY IN GREATER MEASURE.
AND YOU AS WELL, BILL.
YOU ARE THE TRUEST OF FRIENDS TO ME, AND IT GRIEVES ME THAT I WAS NOT SO TO YOU.
THOSE WERE DARK DAYS THAT LEFT DEEP WOUNDS--I DO NOT DENY IT.
BUT WE HAVE BEGUN THE WORK OF HEALING WHAT WAS BROKEN--AND THAT LIFTS MY HEART.
PERHAPS NEXT TIME, YOU WILL DO ME THE HONOR OF CARRYING THE TWILIGHT SWORD TO BATTLE?
THE HONOR WOULD BE MINE, MY FRIEND...

...THOUGH I FEAR THE DARK DAYS HAVE NOT ENDED.
DO YOU NEED A MAGIC PORTAL, JANE? OR ARE YOU GOING BY HORSE?
MAGIC PORTAL, TA. I'M THAT KNACKERED.
...WHAT MR. HORSE SAID.
THOR--NOW THAT THE END-OF-THE-WORLD STUFF IS DEALT WITH, WE NEED TO TALK. I CAME HERE FROM VALHALLA...
OH? HAS SOMETHING OCCURRED IN THOSE HALLS?
Something had, though 'tis a tale related elsewhere.*
For our purposes, simply know that in this moment...the future might have changed.
*AVENGERS INC. #3.
ODIN...HE WARNED ME AGAINST WARNING YOU. BUT I HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING.
Thus are fates decided.
THERE HAVE BEEN OMENS, THOR--NIGHTMARES IN HEAVEN. DREAMS OF A DARK FATE LINKED TO MJOLNIR...
...THAT A WARRIOR HOLDING IT WILL SOON MEET THEIR END.
THEN I SHOULD NOT LET THIS HAMMER OUT OF MY GRIP AGAIN...
I AM GLAD YOU TOLD ME, JANE.
Jane the Valkyrie saw the danger over Thor's head. But forewarned was forearmed, and it was still only danger--not Thor's death.
Not yet.
THOUGH IT IRKS ME THAT MY LATE FATHER IS AGAIN INTERFERING IN MY LIFE AND CHOSE YOU AS HIS AGENT...
ACTUALLY, HE DIDN'T. HE FOUND A WAY TO FREE A SOUL FROM VALHALLA TO DO HIS DIRTY WORK FOR HIM...

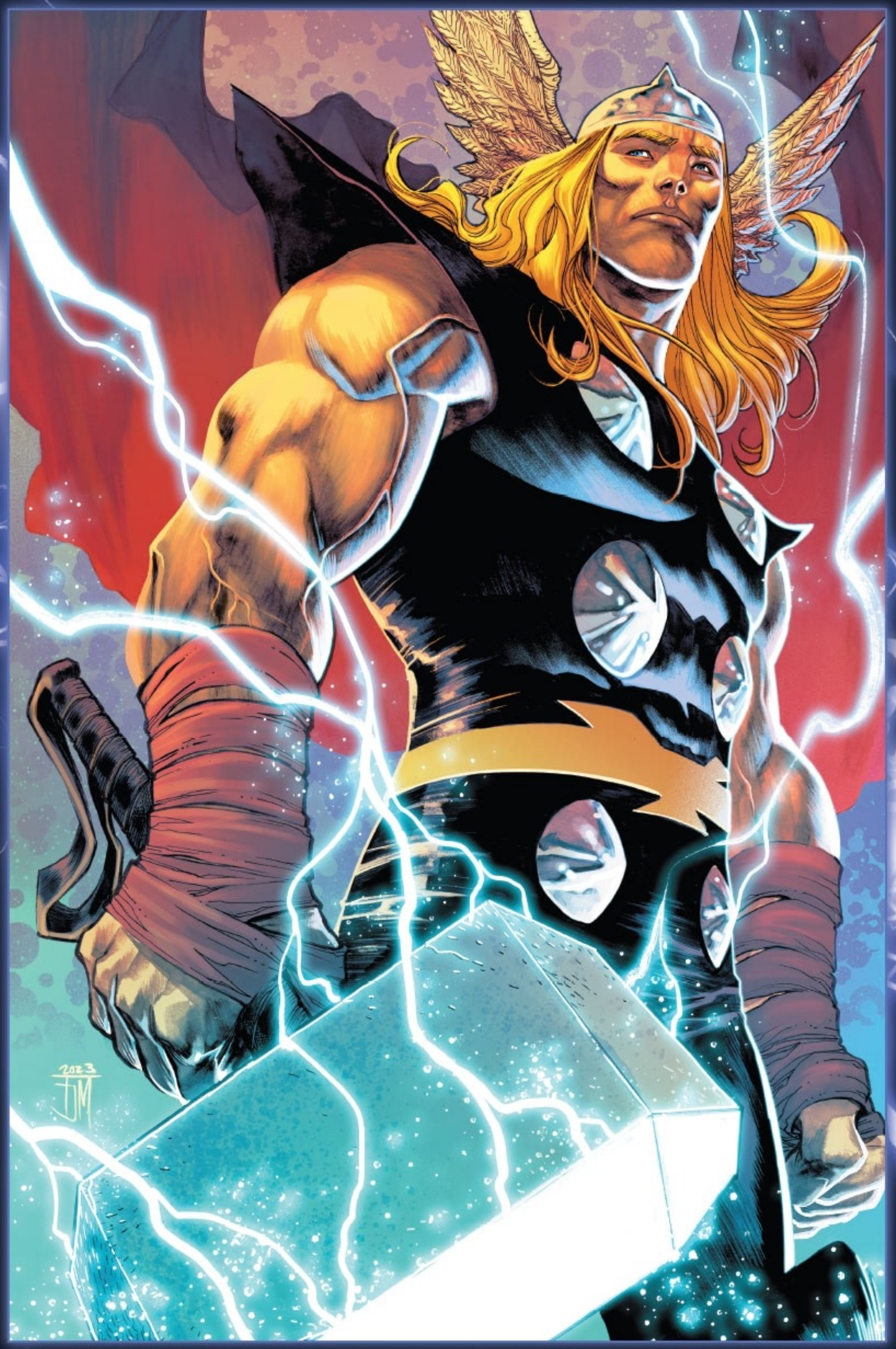
"...THE **EXECUTIONER** IS BACK."
ROXXON
SKURGE.
CAN I SAY HOW MUCH I LOVE YOUR WORK?
SAY WHAT YOU **LIKE**, MINOTAUR. BUT I'M NOT HERE BECAUSE I **WANT** TO BE.
MY **FRIEND** TELLS ME YOU'RE THE KEEPER OF THOR'S **LEGEND** IN THIS WORLD-- AND THAT MIGHT BE **USEFUL** TO US.
I HAVE MADE CERTAIN *RECENT ACQUISITIONS*, YES. THOUGH THAT'S NOT PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE YET...
NOW
PFFT! THERE'S KNOWLEDGE **BEYOND** KNOWLEDGE. I HAD A **VISION**, WHILE I WAS DEAD.
I SAW ***THOR-- SAVING THIS WORLD FROM DISASTER.***
MY **FRIEND** THINKS WE HAVE A MUTUAL INTEREST IN **PREVENTING** THAT...
DISASTER IS WHERE THE *MONEY* IS, IT'S TRUE. I THINK WE CAN DO *BUSINESS*, EXECUTIONER.
AND IT'S A *PLEASURE* TO MEET YOUR LOVELY, AH...FRIEND...
OH, THE PLEASURE IS ALL **MINE**, MR. AGGER.



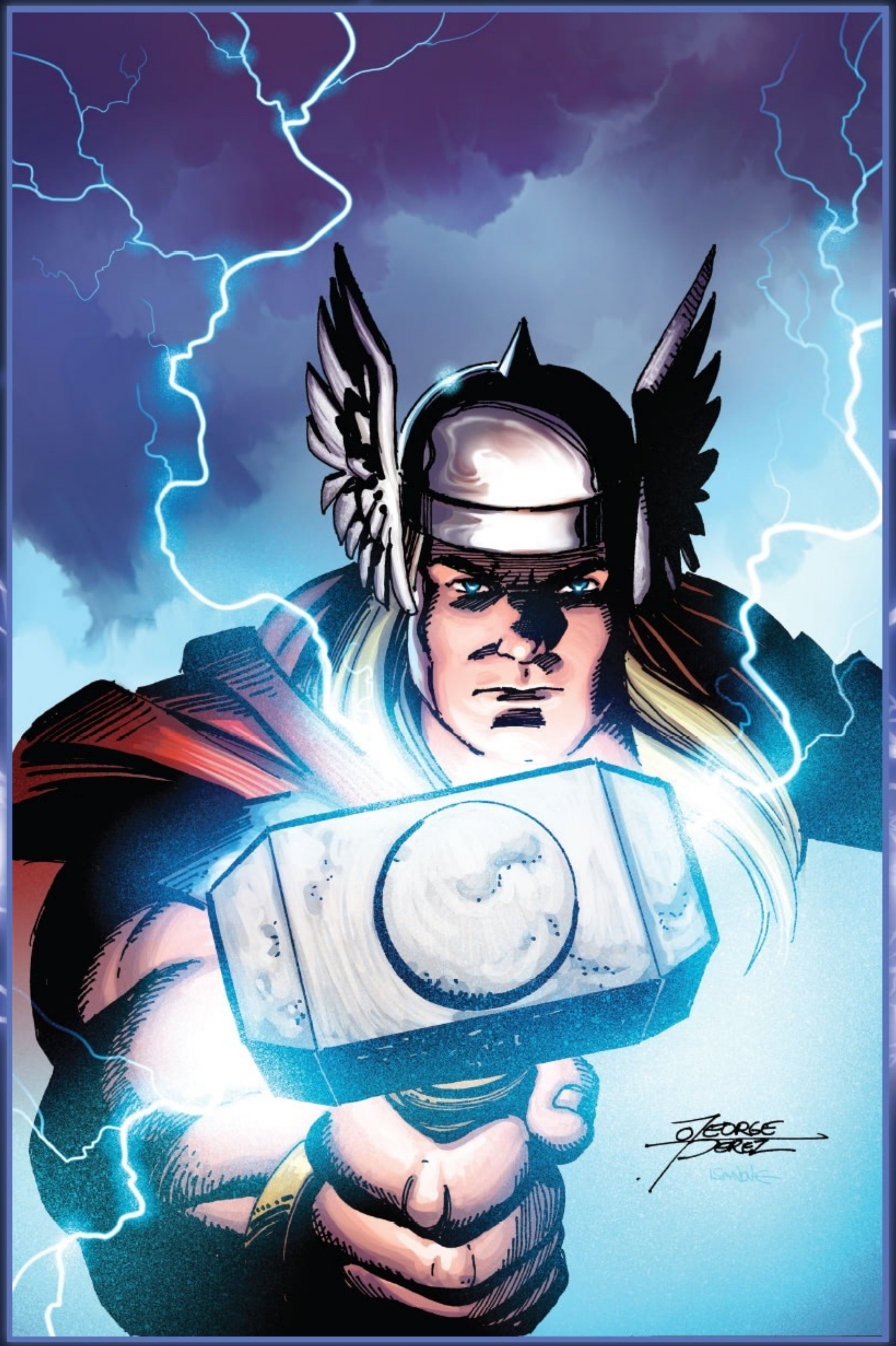
CAVEAT EMPTOR



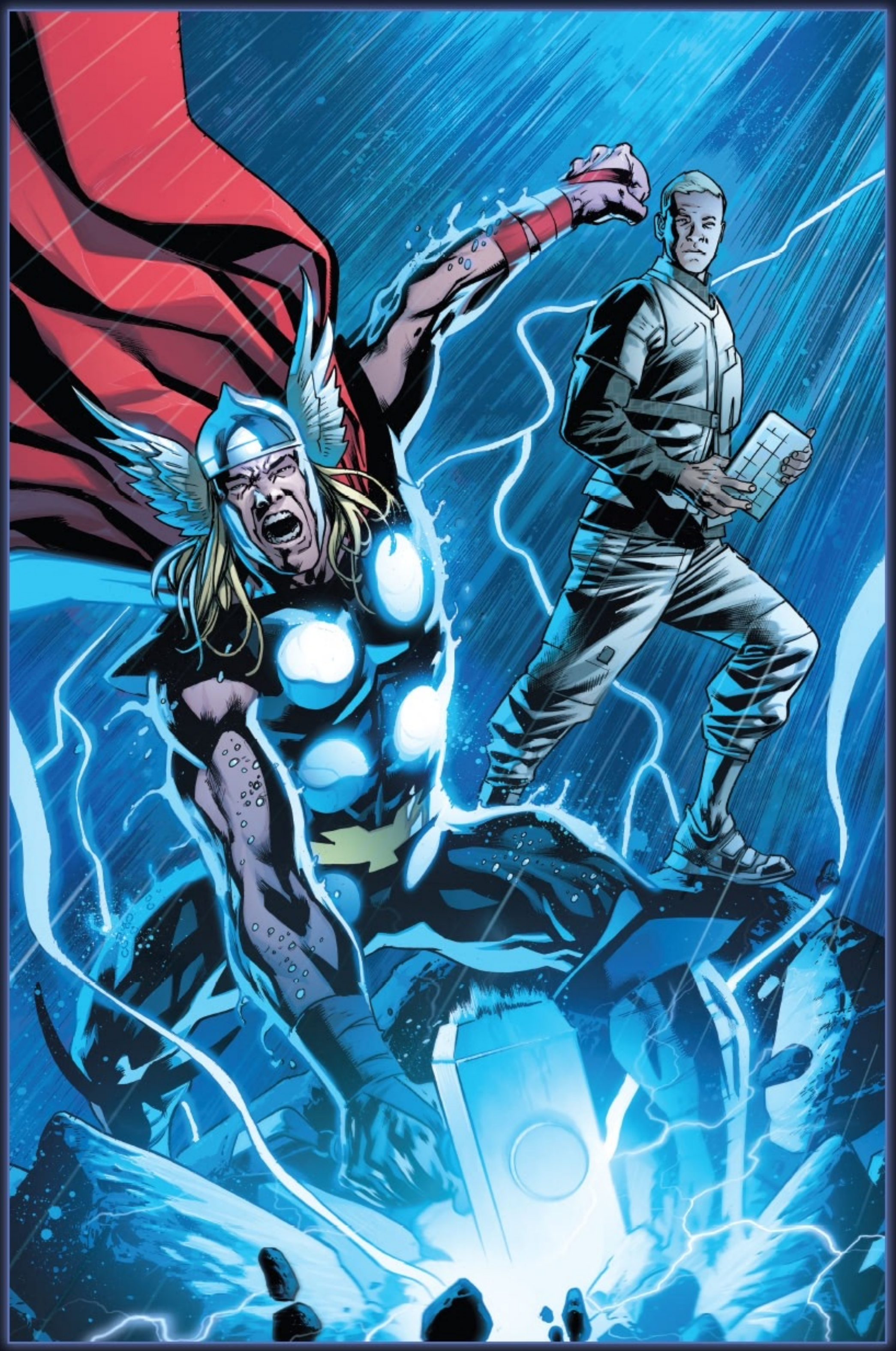
1 FOIL VARIANT BY **MARTÍN CÓCCOLO**



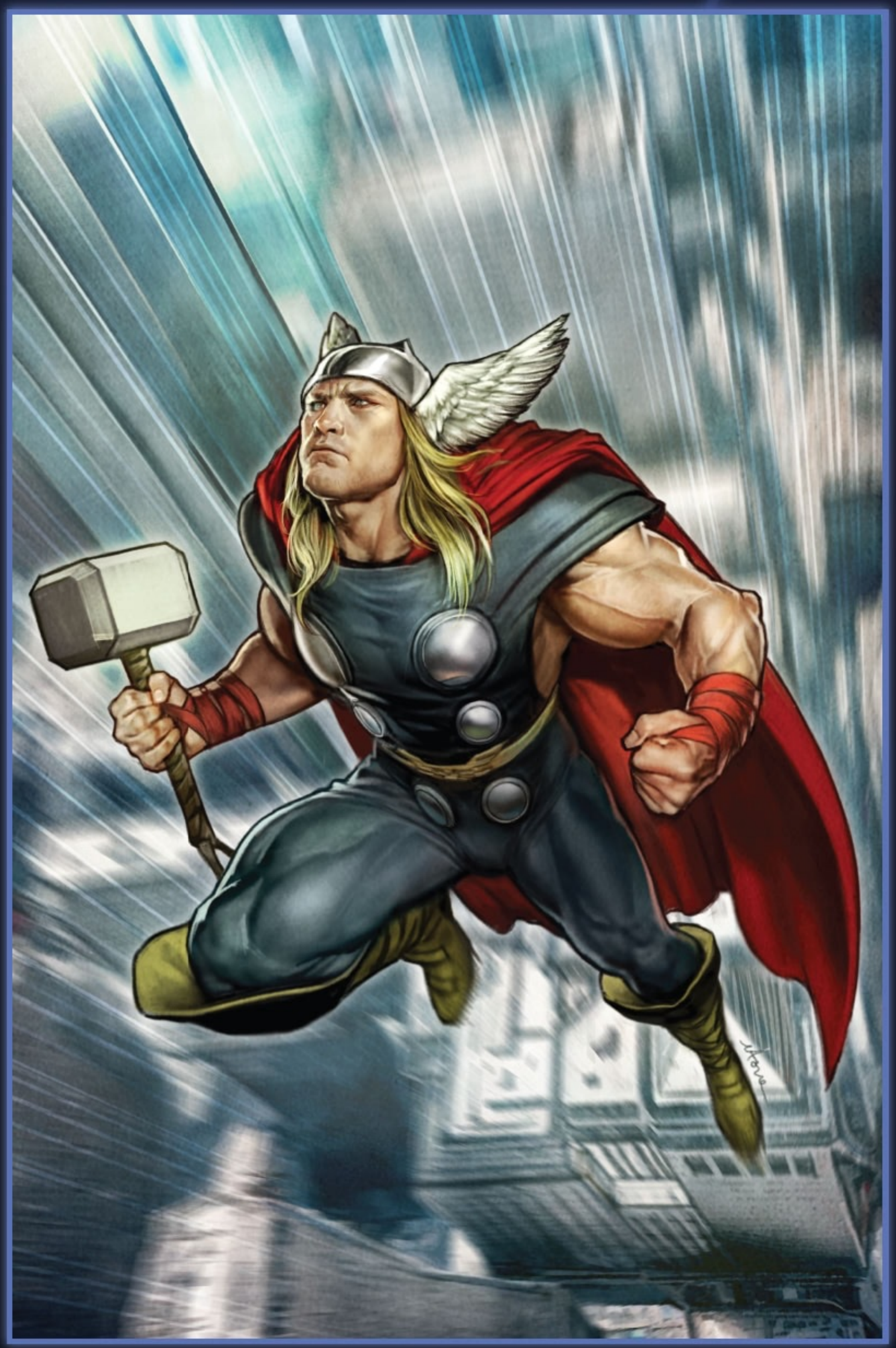
1 VARIANT BY **FRANCIS MANAPUL**



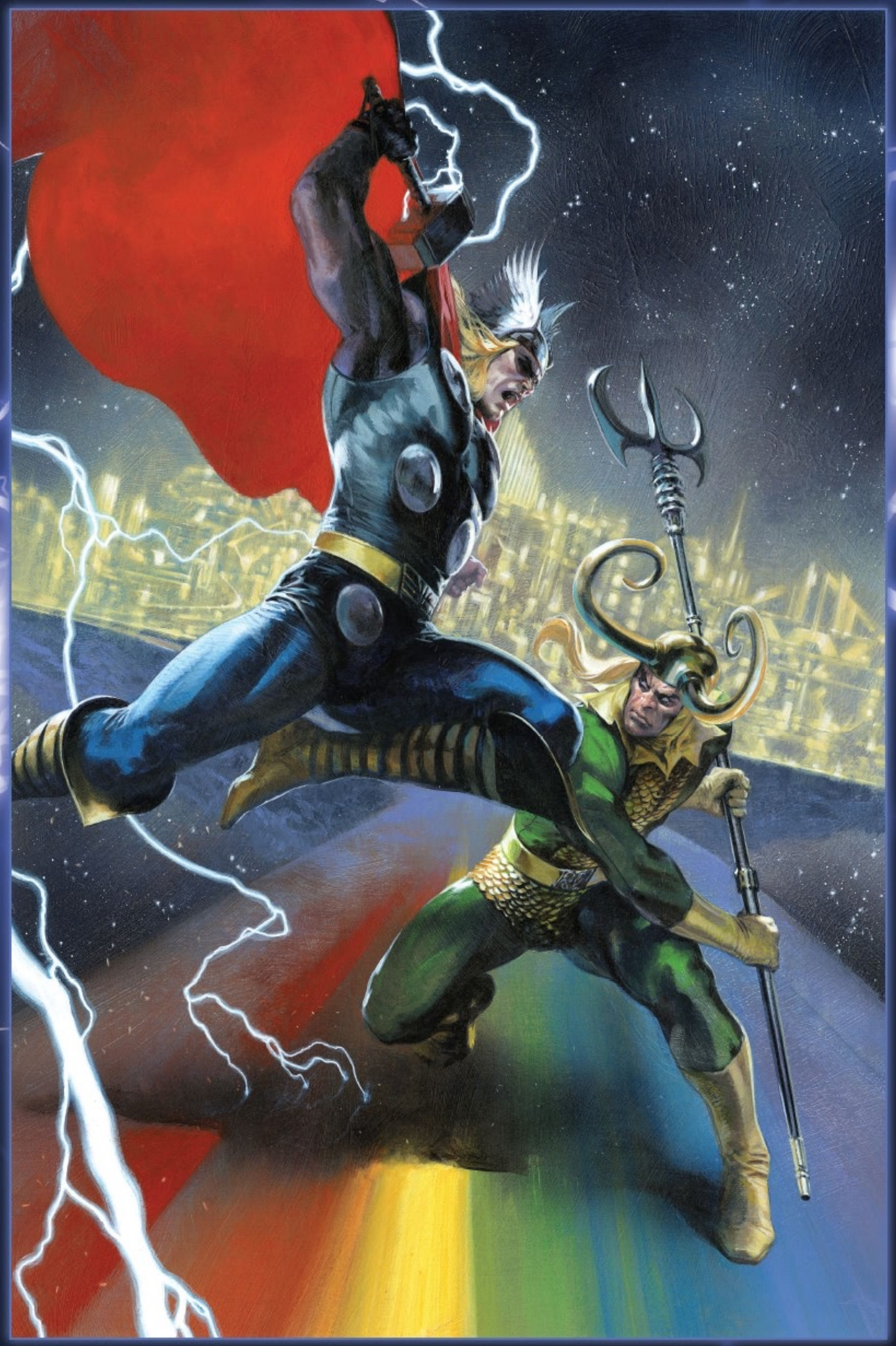
1 VARIANT BY **GEORGE PÉREZ & RICHARD ISANOVE**



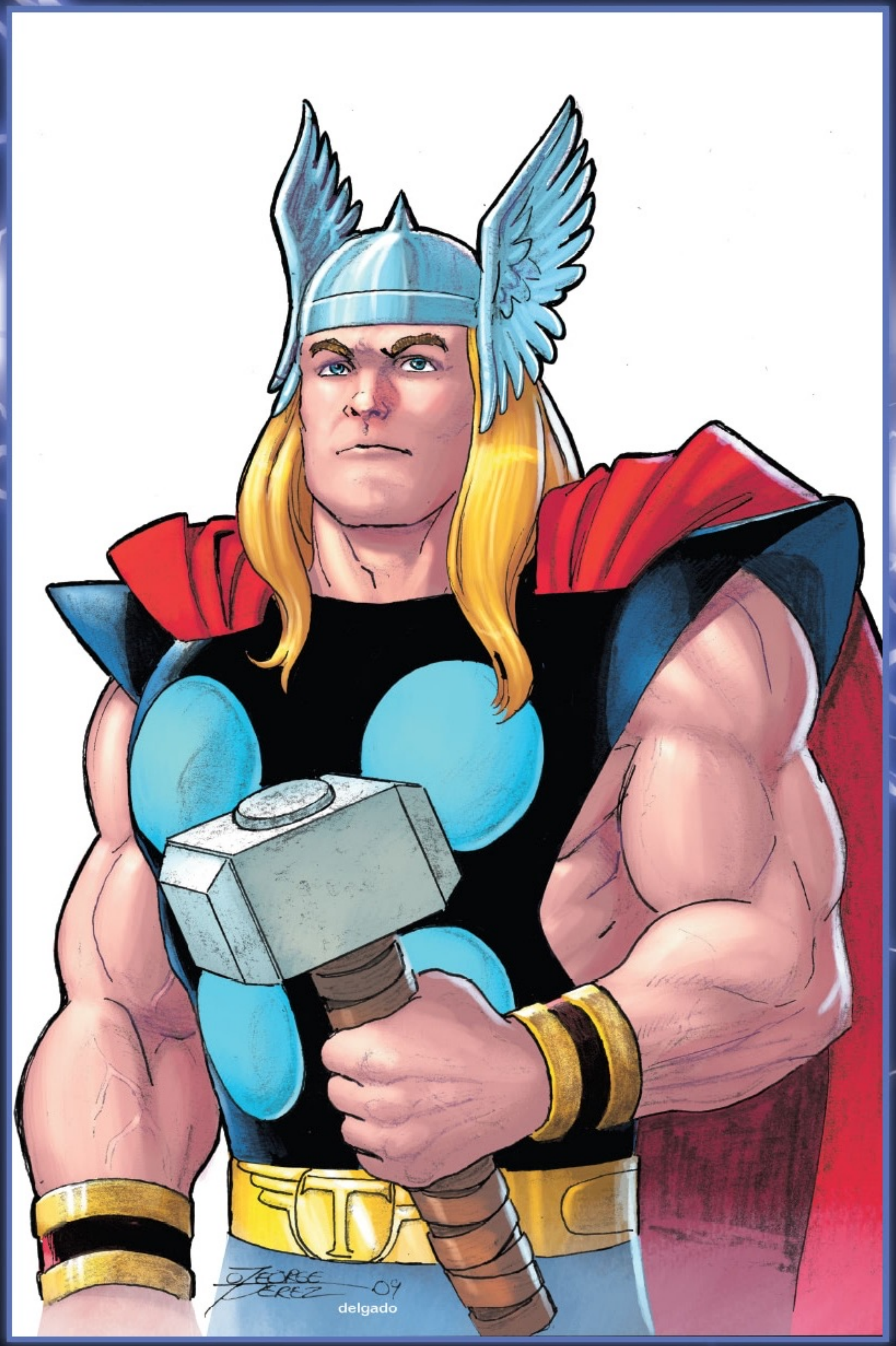
1 G.O.D.S. VARIANT BY **BRYAN HITCH & BRAD ANDERSON**



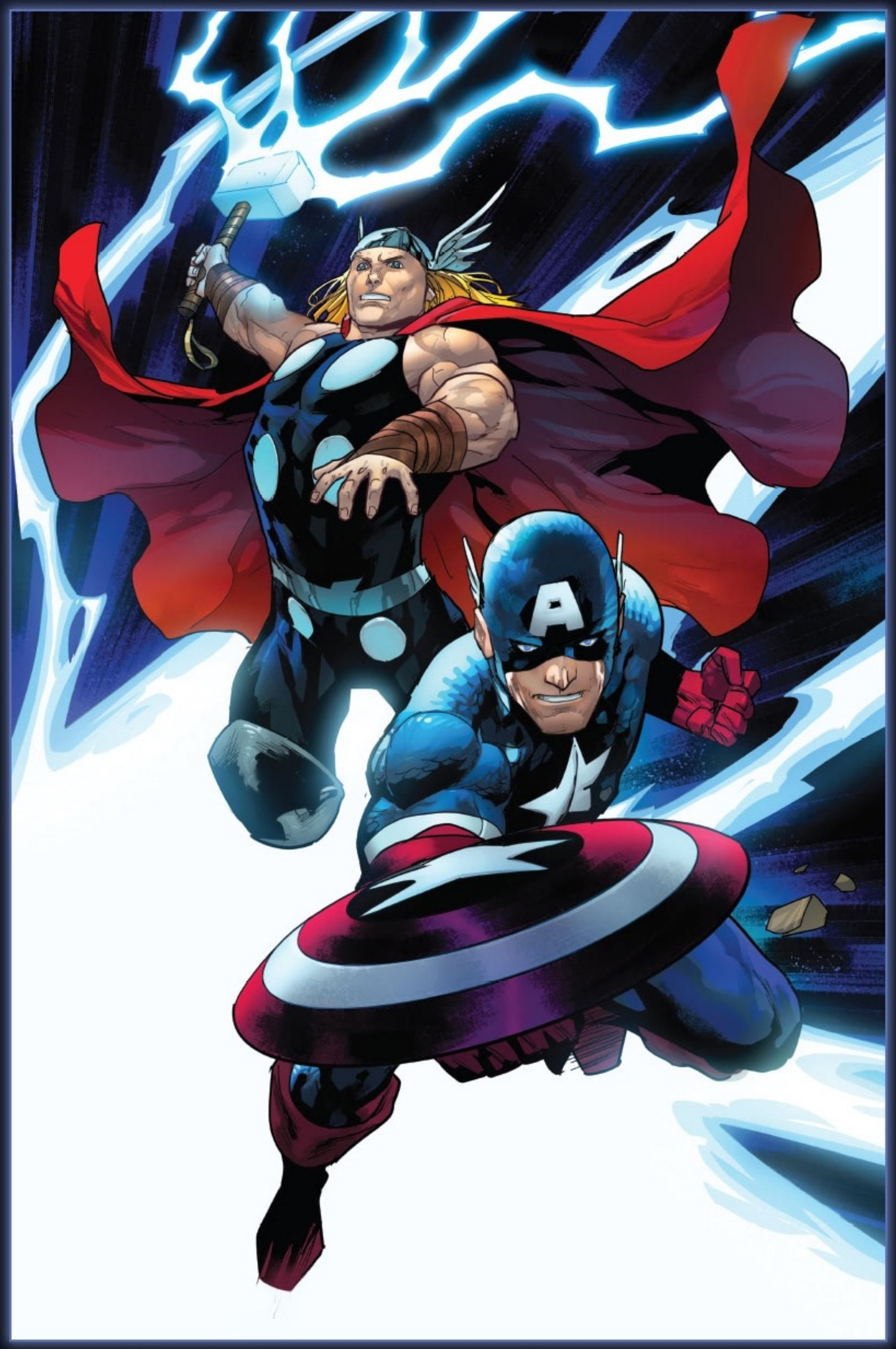
1 VARIANT BY **STONEHOUSE**



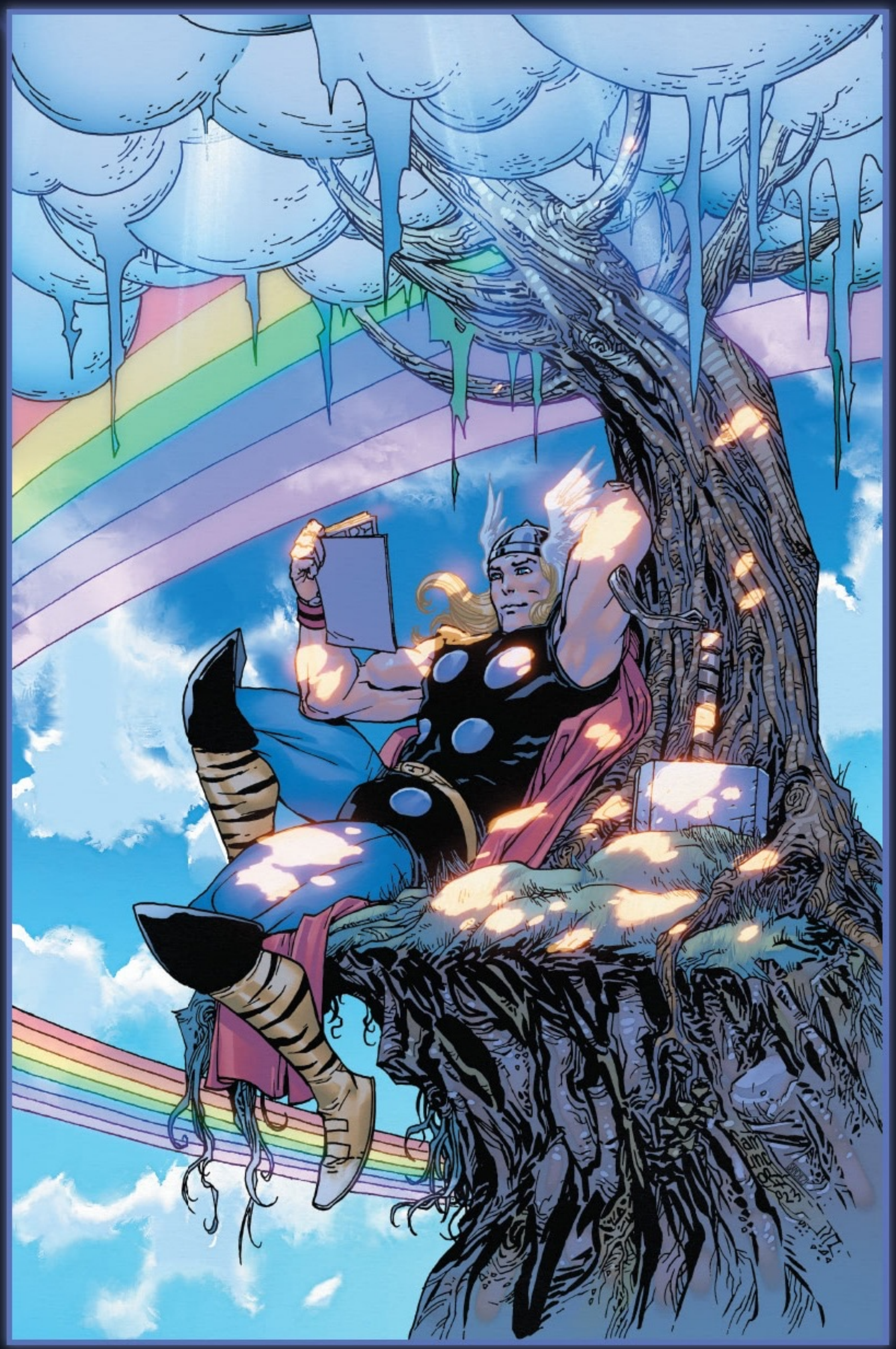
2 VARIANT BY **GABRIELE DELL'OTTO**



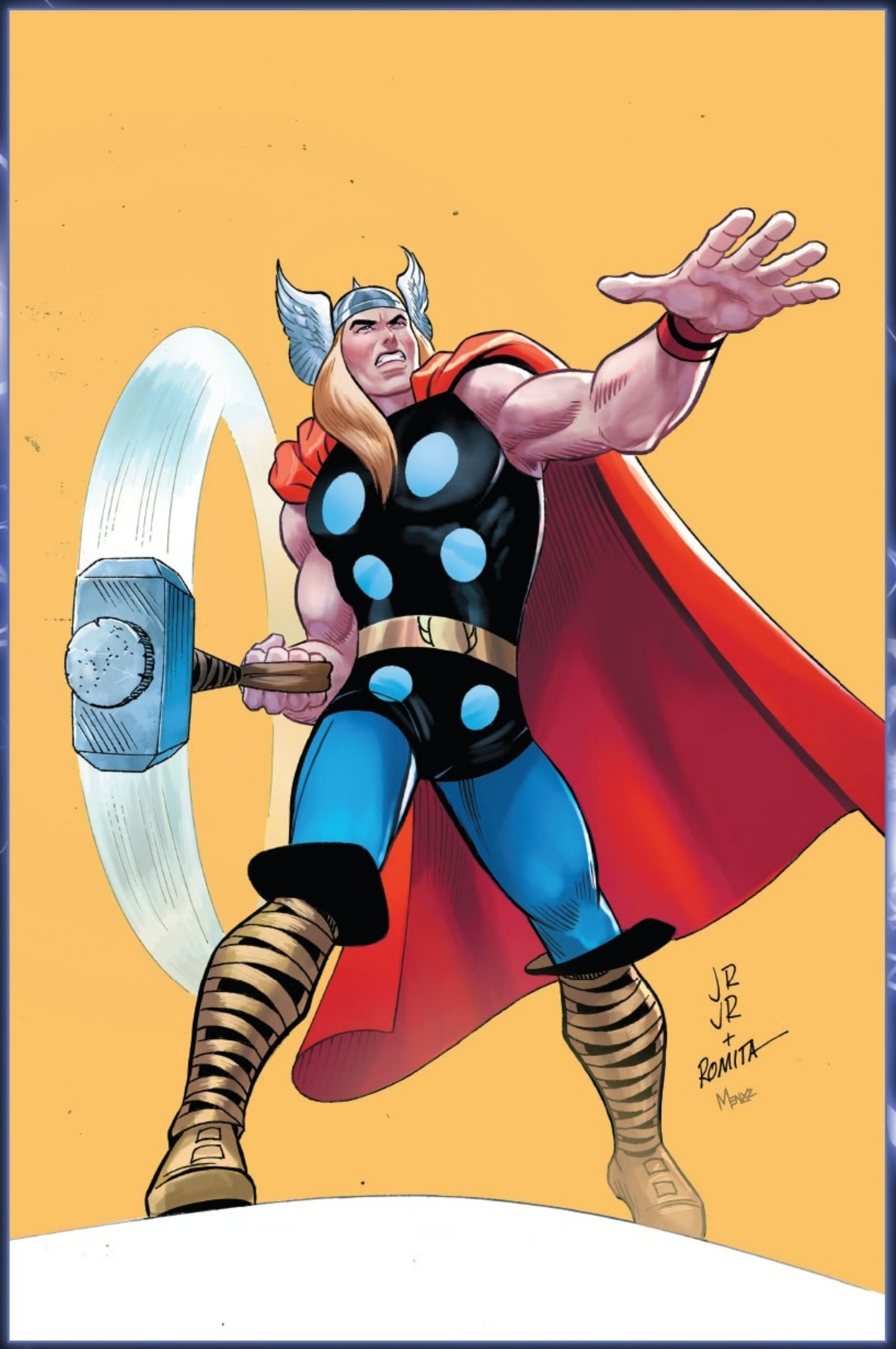
2 VARIANT BY **GEORGE PÉREZ & EDGAR DELGADO**



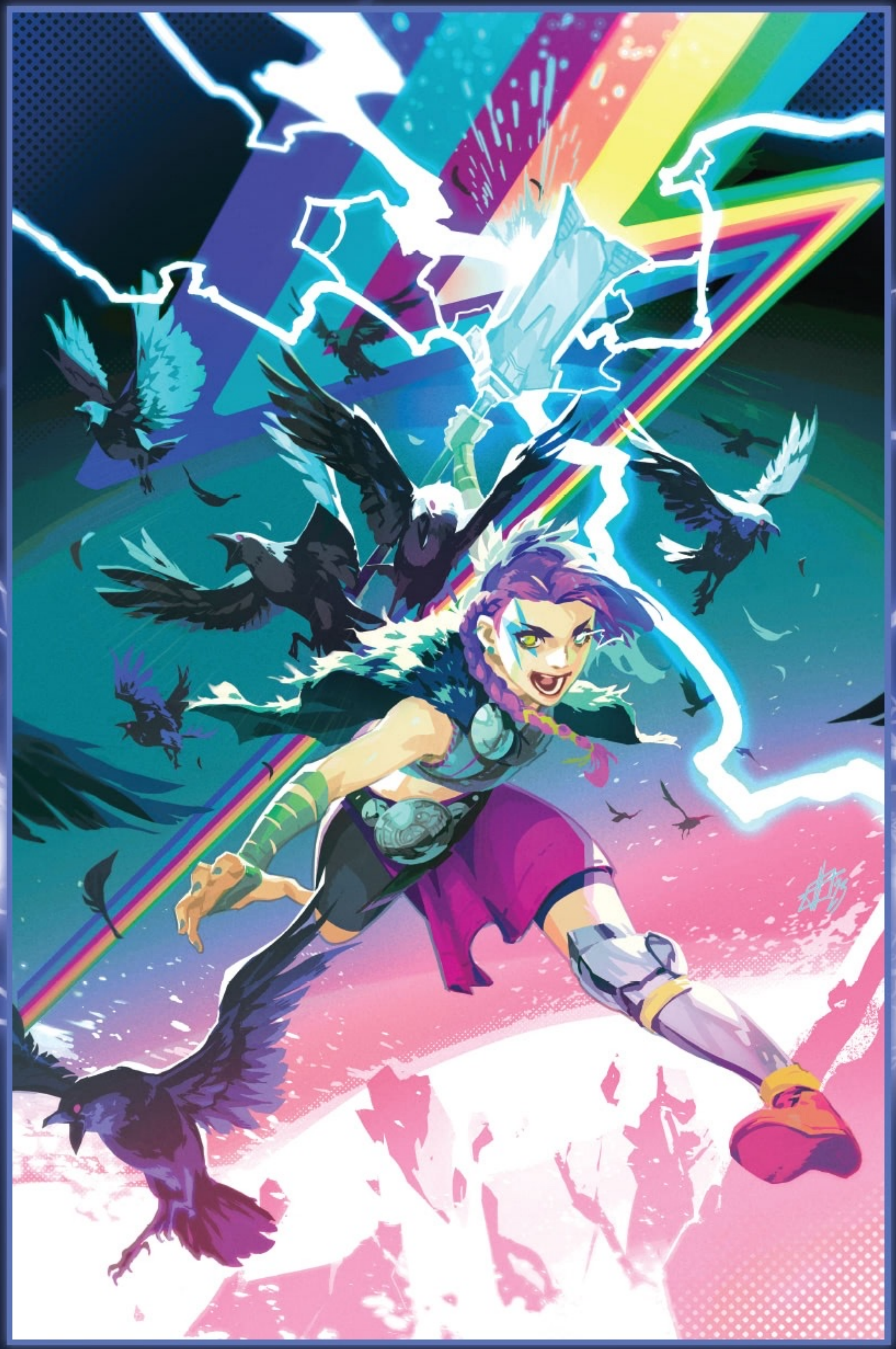
2 STORMBREAKERS VARIANT BY **JAN BAZALDUA & DAVID CURIEL**



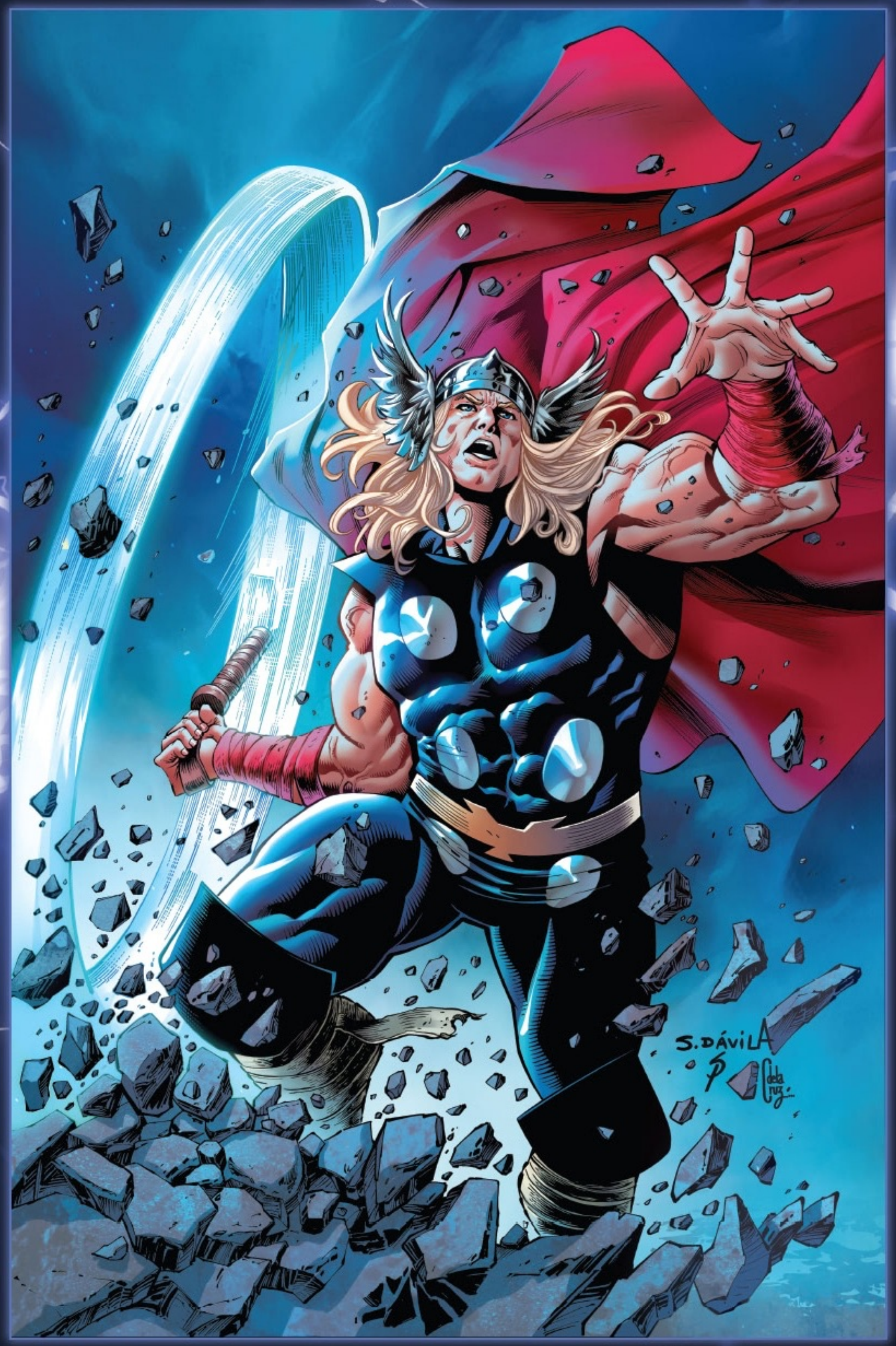
3 MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS VARIANT BY **GIUSEPPE CAMUNCOLI & ALEJANDRO SÁNCHEZ**



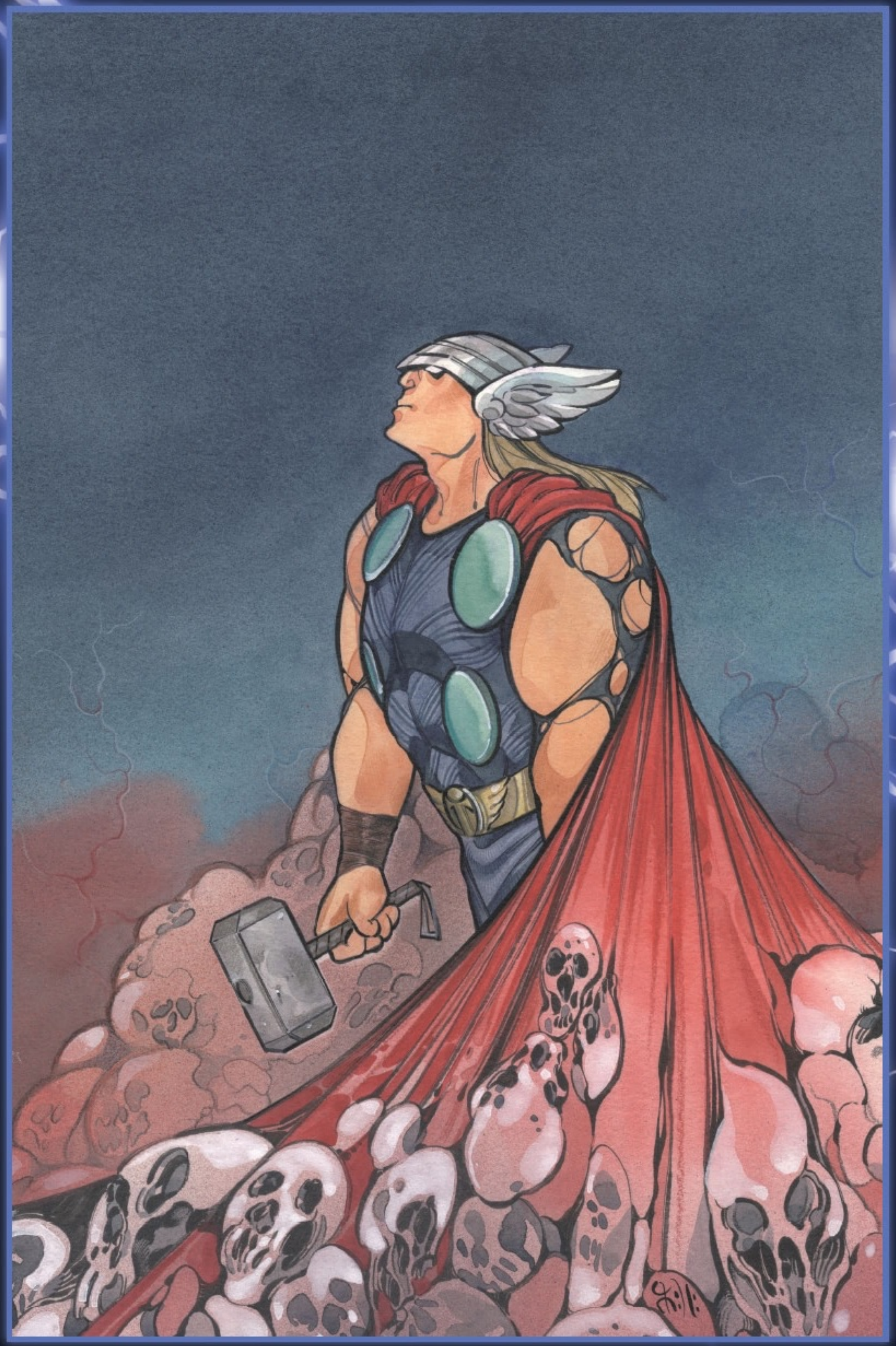
3 Variant by **John Romita Jr.**
John Romita Sr.
& **Marcio Menyz**



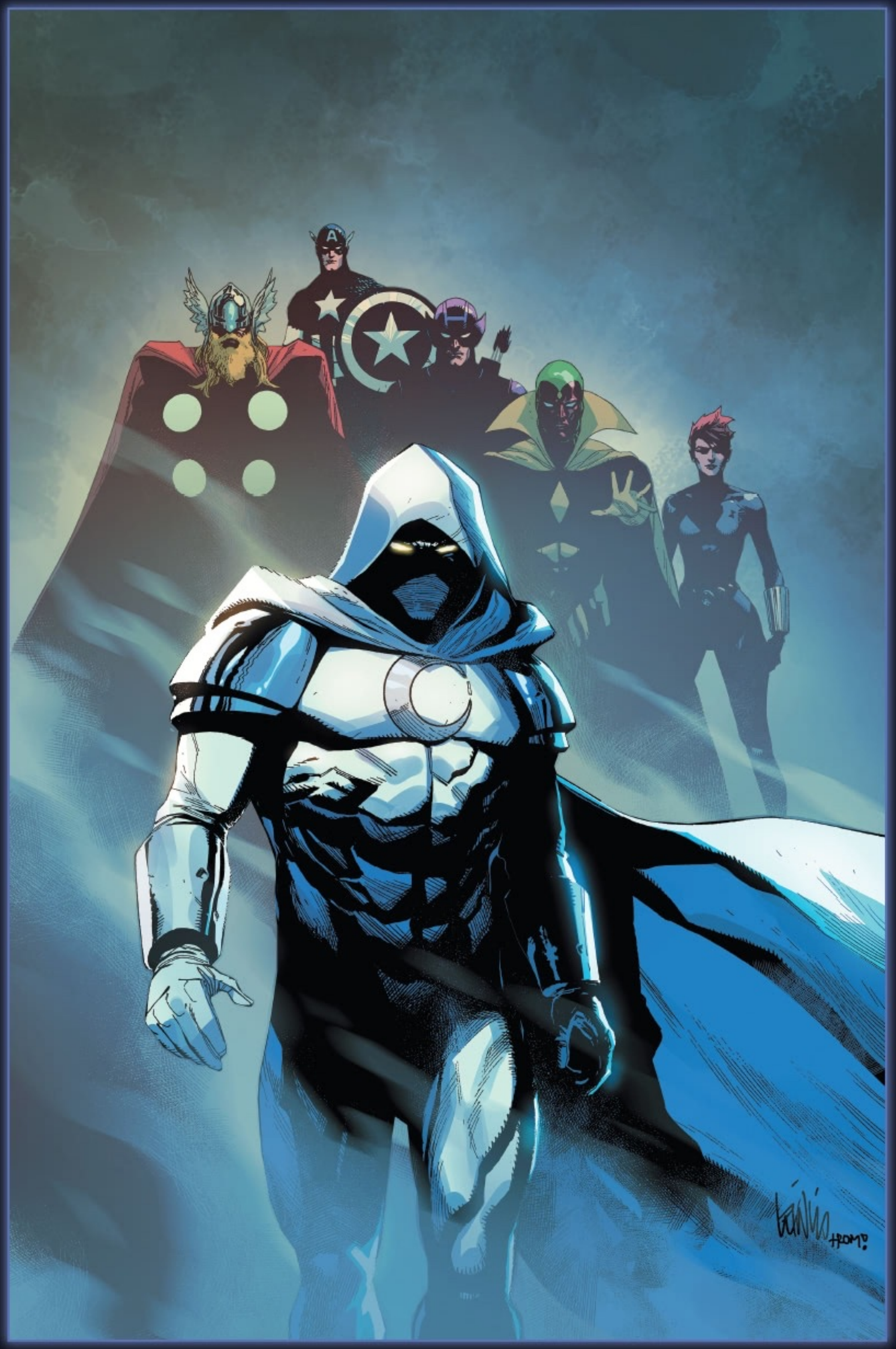
3 New Champions Variant by
Toni Infante



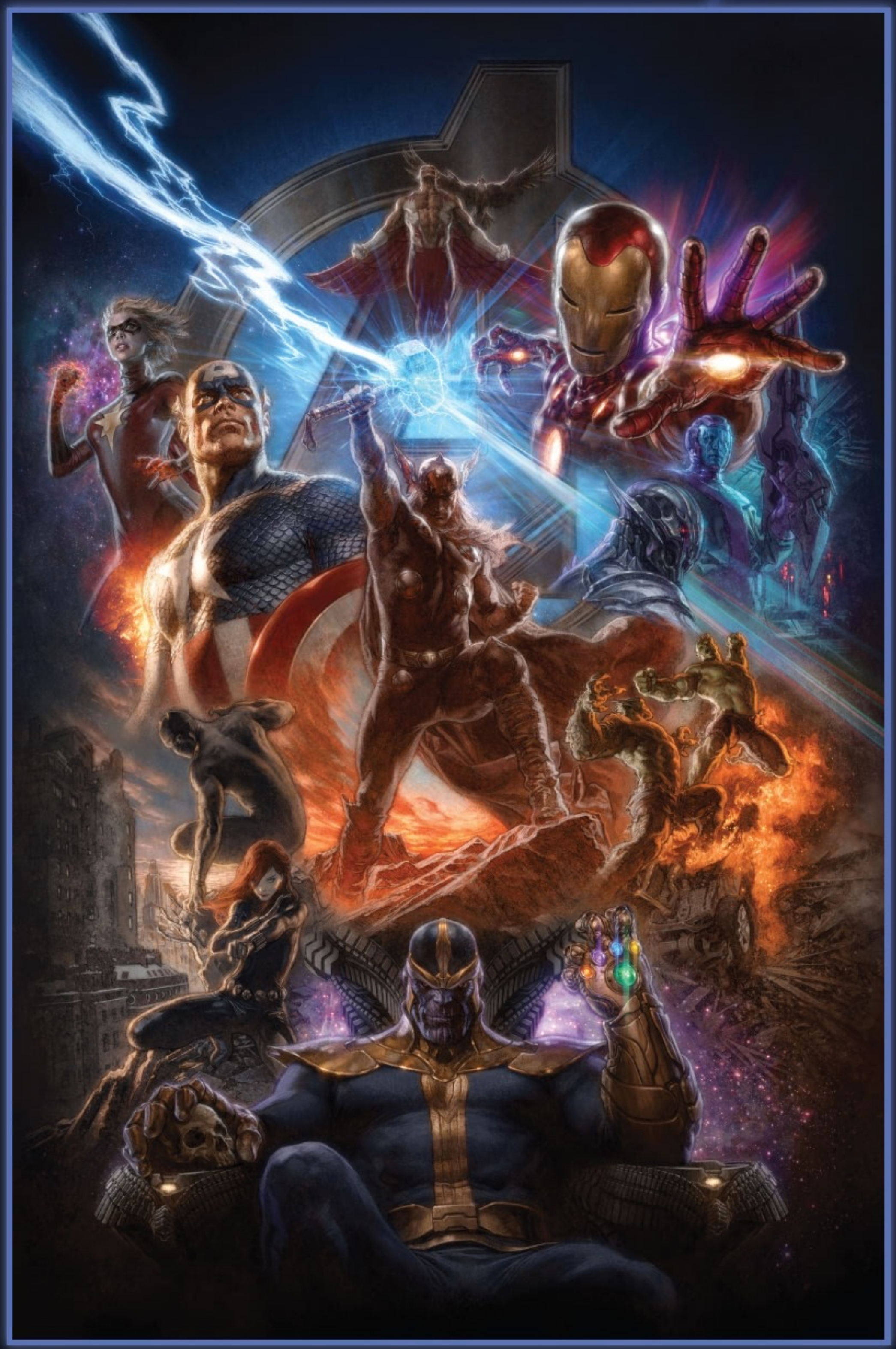
4 Variant by **Sergio Dávila**
& **Ceci De La Cruz**



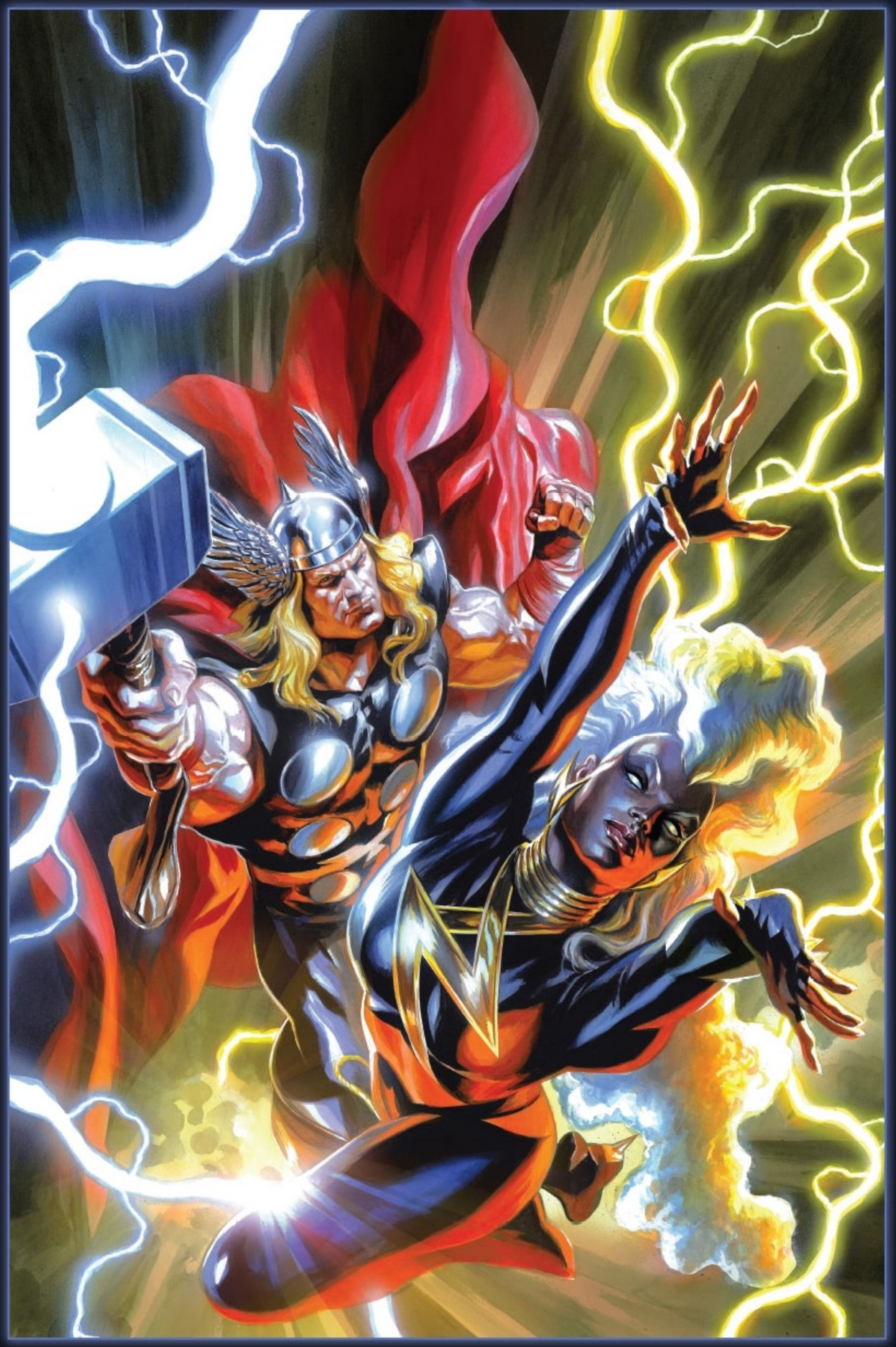
5 Nightmare Variant by
Peach Momoko



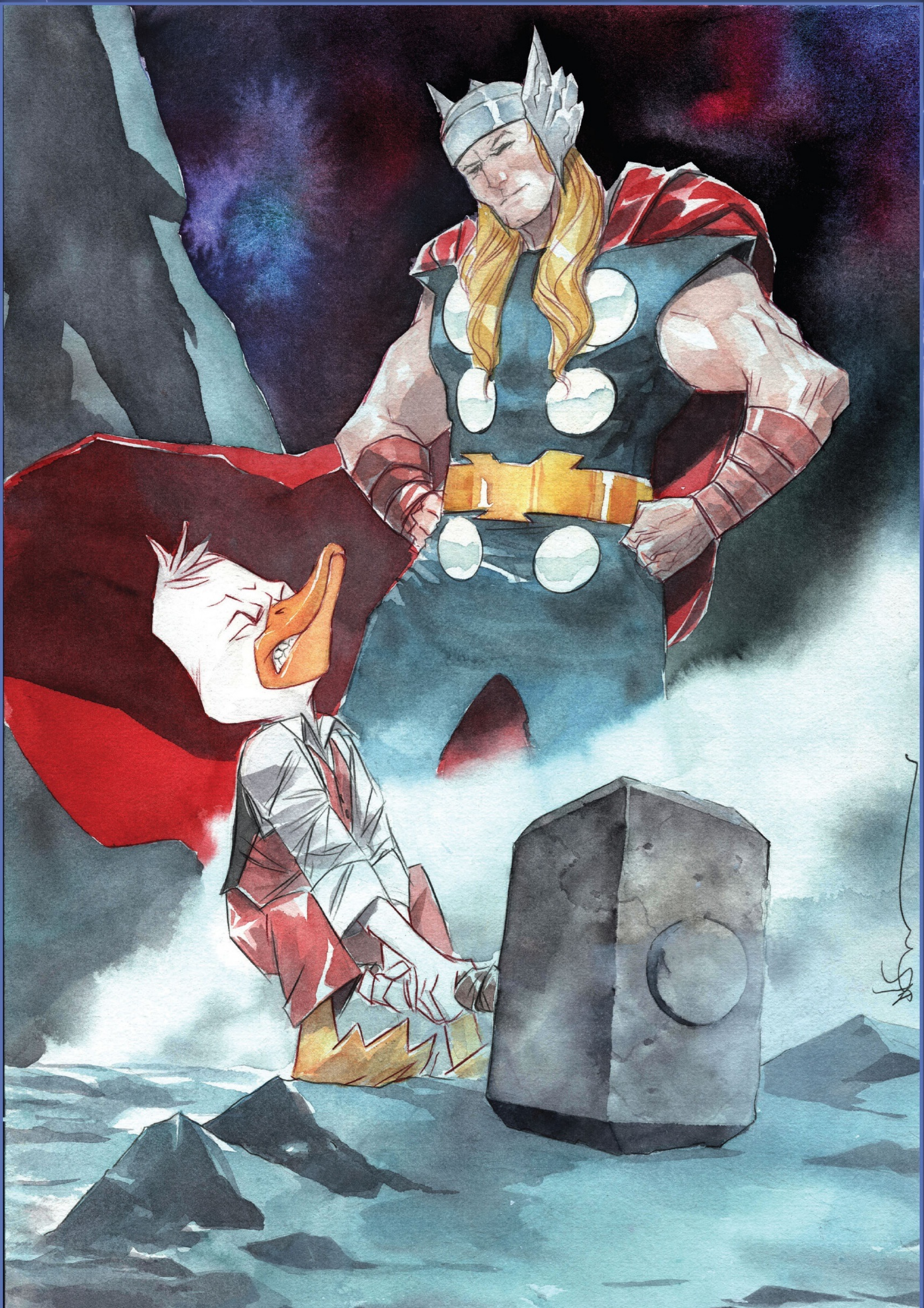
4 Knight's End Variant by
Leinil Francis Yu
& **Romulo Fajardo Jr.**



4 Avengers 60th Anniversary Variant
by **Mauro Cascioli**



5 Variant by **Felipe Massafera**



#5 Howard the Duck variant by **Dustin Nguyen**

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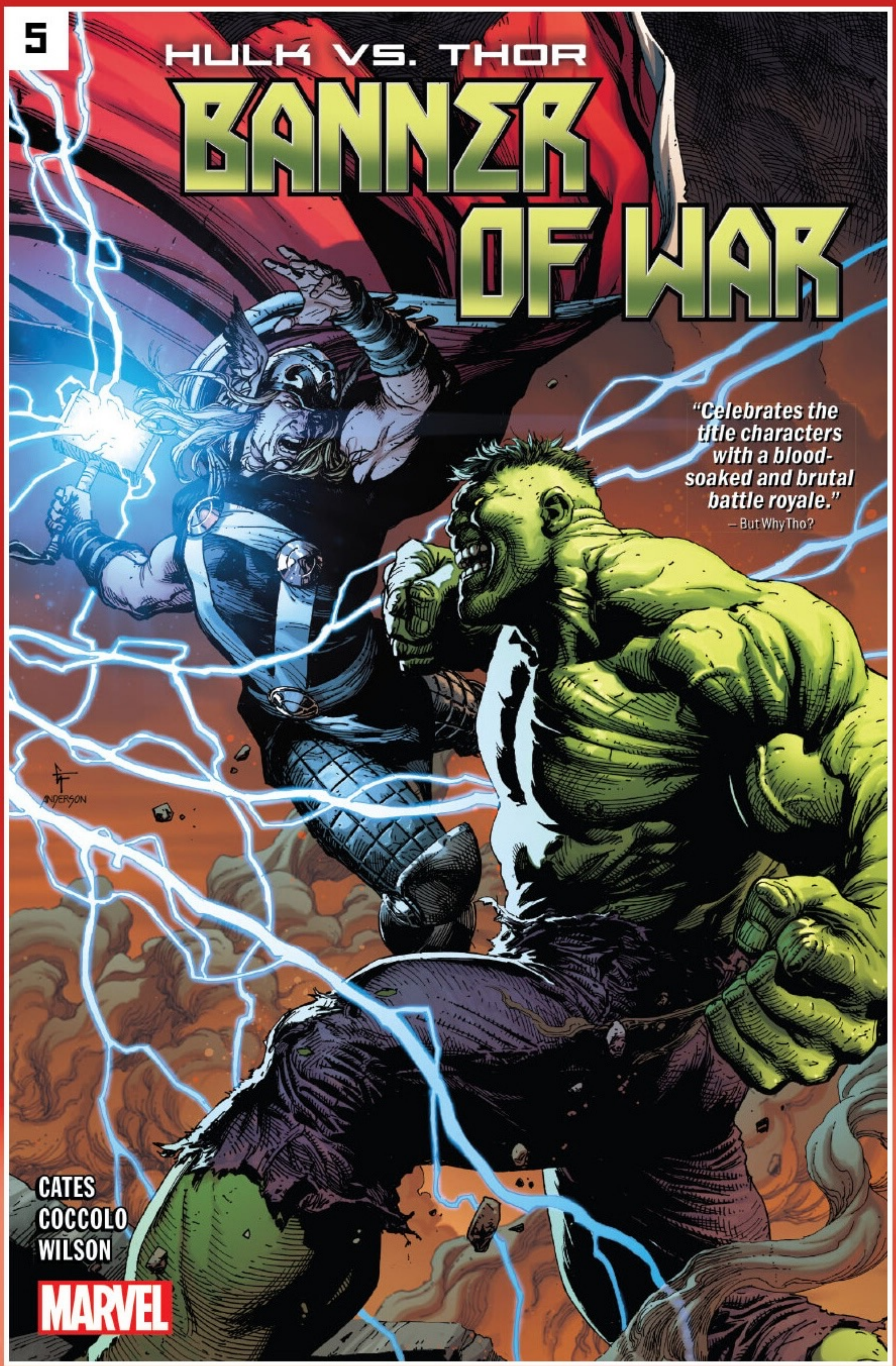
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